

W.A. Patterson

To André Gide, in all of his ignorance

To Sylvia Plath, in all of her brilliance

***"The City is served Bartholomew!"
To the American Prison!***

Selected Novellas and Stories 1995 – 2009
A Compendium

With Introductions and Notes by Michael J. Burns and Dr. Marian Apostol
Commentary by Robert Hass and Julian Boyd

"There must be two Americas: one that sets the captive free, and one that takes a once-captive's new freedom away from him, and picks a quarrel with him with nothing to found it on; then kills him to get his land." Mark Twain, "To the Person Sitting in the Darkness"

"The genius of poetry is dead, but the demon of suspicion has come into the world. I am firmly convinced that the only antidote for this, the only thing that might make the reader forget the eternal I of the author, is complete sincerity." Stendhal

"If you can't find the station, find the song. If you can't find the song, find the station."
Patterson

CHP

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“Morpheus’s Desert of the Real” by Alex Patterson, first published in *When I Was There: Life at Berkeley 1960-2010*, published by Rebus 101Books, 2010

SCHWARZE BERGE AFGHANISTAN’S
Translated by the author

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IN MEMORY OF

Julian Boyd
1931 - 2005



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to the music artists who unbeknownst to them and in ways unexpected to me, made it possible for me to write *Between Heaven and Earth*, *The American Prison*, and *Expatriate-Candide*; when writing was often a listener's experience at the time that the writing was happening: David Bowie, Iggy Pop, Queen and Freddy Mercury, Genesis, The Red Hot Chili Peppers, Reamon, Nirvana, INXS, U2, Journey and Steve Perry, Puccini and Pavarotti, Fleetwood Mac, Ayumi, The Cranberries, Smashing Pumpkins, Bob Marley, REM, Frank Zappa, Jane's Addiction, Rolling Stones, Frankie Goes to Hollywood, Supertramp, Queen, Deep Purple, Eric Clapton and George Harrison — Cream

And America's greatest living poet Anthony Kiedis.

It is worth mentioning a few of the songs: *The Man Who Sold the World*, *Heroes*, *American Caesar*, *Tonight*, *Under Pressure*, *Mama*, *The Battle of Epping Forest*, *Trick of the Tail*, *Road Trippin*, *Californication*, *Supergirl*, *Never Tear Us Apart*, *The Loved One*, *Anyway You Want It*, *Faithfully*, *Nessum Dorma*, *Gypsy*, *Go Your Own Way*, *Evolution*, *When You're Gone*, *To Sheila*, 1979, *Exodus*, *Until the Day is Done*, *Man Sized Wreath*, *Peaches En Regalia*, *Bobby Brown*, *Who are the Brain Police*, *Jane Says*, *Indian Girl*, *The Crime of the Century*, *We Will Rock You*, *Stormbringer*, *Badge*

A deep appreciation is expressed *in memoriam* to Frank Zappa for his fearlessly acute analysis of modes, groups, persons and ways of censorship and moral policing, and of free speech in the United States of America. I note that what applies to music lyrics applies to all forms of the written and spoken and even the thought word, as Zappa's interview on "Filthy Thoughts" says so well, and then again his impersonation of "The Central Scrutinizer" on his album *Joe's Garage*, a radical and hilarious extravaganza of control and feasible ludicrousness. It's now hard for me to imagine American life *without* Frank Zappa's testimony to the US Congress on record labeling by moral ratings as advocated by the PMRC and others. Please look it up when you get the chance, it's on YouTube. (I hope you will also find the time to look up Frank's various interviews on YouTube.) You can as well look at a post-mortem of the whole PMRC affair: It is as sad and wasteful as it darkly ironic, as it is sourly unsurprising for this country; a country where things come too late: www.associatedcontent.com/article/349977/frank_zappa_vs_tipper_gore_pg2. If you get the time, listen to Jello Biafra's performance of *Die for Oil without the Net Sucker*, which he melds with Frank's music. This is good too—<http://vimeo.com/10625927>, where you will see James Baker, the Treasury Sec. under Bush I, who also had a wife on the PMRC, and in that context is fittingly relevant and very hilarious.

Special thanks to my friends, who are many and accumulated over the years, hailing from different parts of the world, now, for me, all separated in a nostalgic Diaspora. Special thanks to my colleagues for their input, ideas, whom I will

list in short order: Michael J. Burns of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Dr. Marian Apostol, of the University of Bucharest. I would like to express thanks to Robert Hass, who encouraged me at the right time. Special thanks to those in my family who cared.

Let the book now swim in the world of men.

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THE AMERICAN PRISON

A Little Forward

This essay is not a term paper on prisons in America. Rather, it is a document of personal disclosure.

Mr. Patterson has engaged passionately with his American tradition. This is to the degree of an exceptionality that is remarkably exposed in this work. He has wrestled so intensely with America that he has taken to exile in Europe. This is the second exceptionality remarked here.

I write criticism of academic physics, and do it with some flair. But Alex addresses a bigger culture and hierarchy, writing with such passion, poetry and structure as to make the third exceptionality of this work. I think that this all amounts to a ponderance worthy of your time.

*Michael J. Burns
Grand Rapids, Michigan
October 30, 2009*

Introduction

“Ideology is a false totality because it has not appointed its own limits, because it is unable to reflect the limitations of its limits . . . Like a planet revolving around an absent sun, an ideology is made up of what it does not mention; it exists because there are things which must not be spoken of.” Pierre Macherey

The American Prison is a hard book, hard in the sense of ‘taking no hostages.’ ‘Pulling no punches.’ ‘Nothing is held back.’ It takes those principles to their cultural and literary extremities. People and groups, —isms and some —ologies, do get hit hard: There are so many fuck-babies out there that even if I wanted to censor myself, it would hardly be possible if I wanted to hold onto to the smallest fraction of reality and truth.

There is a quantitatively small but qualitatively powerful literary commentariat. The nature of its self-organization gives an appearance of a group that is significant in its numbers, which in turn gives the impression that it represents a fair, balanced, and democratic coverage of its domain (the world of American letters). I could have opened the first sentence of this paragraph with “There is a huge literary commentariat . . .” There you go.

What’s the point, other than the points I’ve already made? The answer is that it is next to impossible to get this title published in the US in its first release and edition, assuming that there will be others. But the truth is that an American wrote it. It is surely also needless to say that at it’s off-limits to the Magi’s cumbersome lit mags, but who cares about that. Two of the pointless implications being, however, that no agent will agent it, no publicist will publicize it, no editor will solicit it, and so on.

What’s the point, beyond that? There is one. There’s a big one, which hangs around our necks. It makes Dangling Men of us, Baumelnde Männer, Männer in der Schwebe. Specifically, that in publishing the American-unpublishable, I’m advancing myself deep into the realm of ‘impropriety.’ (As Sinclair Lewis said in his 1930 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, “American professors like their literature clear, cold, pure, and very dead.”) To be sure, it’s a big realm; massive actually when you factor in the fact that we’re going directly to the heart of etiquette and taste, to the notion that our deontic natures exist part and parcel with our anthropocene—which in itself is a statement radical enough to be hated by all manner of fuck-babies.

There is one item of that ‘impropriety,’ which is worth mentioning in the context, the context being that this is a forward to a written document: O Loly,

then, this should be a thing that is not so terribly complicated in the end, right? Indeed. But—namely, and therefore, that in advancing into impropriety in this particular mode (publishing the American-unpublishable—a fact which I maintain and will continue to maintain until an American publisher decides to pick this up), that yes, there will be a perception amongst certain institutional groups and individuals of their ilk that I am gerrymandering the process . . . if you like, a pathetic feint-heartedness that creates a certain disgust especially as that perception derives from a desire to reinforce a literary proprietorship. Yes I am an impropiator. And I really cannot be bothered further with it.

I hope that you'll enjoy or somehow be moved by *The American Prison*; a prison that is to follow in the sum of about 40,000 words, constituting, to complete a thought, a document that is in and of itself completely insignificant when seen from a long historical vantage point of centuries of letters. As all of the material in this published collection.

Allow me though a slight betrayal: A further natural liberty in creating an aggressive single-quote imprint-curmudgeon, which you can read a few spaces down from this paragraph. We take these old verbal manners as the quaint textual locutions of naïve individuals from an older time, individuals who wouldn't understand ours and who wouldn't want to (we'd call them reactionary, if we were semi-literate we'd call them disenchanting curmudgeons, if we were smart we'd just read them and reap—apparently we are semi-literate). But that gives the intended effect of ephemeral relativism to the words that seem all too often spoken only from the graves of great ones; but which we the living would prefer to skew to the side so that we may continue the late-blooming and belated death-march of our oxymoronic democratic American literature.

Ille. That is our modern hope, and by its light
We have lit upon the gentle, sensitive mind
And lost the old nonchalance of the hand;
Whether we have chosen chisel, pen or brush,
We are but critics, or but half create,
Timid, entangled, empty and abashed,
Lacking the countenance of our friends.
(12-18 *Ego Dominus Tuus.*) W.B. Yeats

The Author
Summer 2009

THE AMERICAN PRISON



Self-portrait of the author aged fourteen, before prison.

“Aller Anfang ist schwer.”
“Im Anfang war die Tat.”
Goethe

Life has already been historical. That proves that the American prison system is in stasis and degradation. It proves many things. It is important not to pay attention to what writers say. Writers say many things and I do not know why they feel compelled to do this. It is perhaps a sad habit. Orwell is in an exceptional category. His lessons are different. That is a book in itself. If I am lucky this room that I am in right now will generate a book. Maybe even a good book, a book that will with grit and frothy, down-to-earth idealism state the unstated dimensions in American life, the grids if you will. It is not an easy thing given the inherent obstacles that a writer's attitude immediately implies, but it is a possibility. The dray fields in the American heart are so worthy of much more than the footnote that always attends them. It's healthy to have dreams for this book. I don't want any adjectives to apply to this book. I have decided, I think, to forego some of my financial goals, at least for a while or for the time being, to gather around me the needles and eves of a possibly different goal. Perhaps, even, the goal of the American prison. The death-delta grit and mull and substance that happens between two men in prison willing together in unison and camaraderie the formal documents of divorce proceedings with their spouses outside of the prison. I have several minor vignettes that I have hidden away on the outskirts of what we call the internet, a double-edged medium. I have imprisoned them there, so to speak. I certainly do not want them ever republished. They've been given a life sentence. They are well written, and that is the problem. They have what we could call technical and amoral probity that believes itself to be justified by a moral appeal. As well as being very scary. They are scary, a gang of eight psychopaths: murderous templates. No paroles, no appeals for them. They are there because of the American way of doing things. Since there will be no reprieve from this, there will be no reprieve for them. No reprieve for the divorced men declaring the bicameral dualism of their joint declaration, no guts spilled for their attorneys, just state cash. I hate the rich very much. They set up rules that no one can follow except themselves. It's surprising that society doesn't identify them for what they are: a cult. That's why some people want them killed as a class. In Berkeley there are still lots of people who want the rich killed. If they ever are they will only have themselves to blame. Perhaps that is being overly

hard, but as a platitude that the truth is often or always hard, it is only a platitude because certain people are dense. Nearly everyone in prison ends up there because of this factor, each along a different line and plane of grievance and their personal murderous (or otherwise criminal, at least by classification) intentions and reasons. That is a grid. A shy child doesn't have a chance in that capitalism. He has to switch personalities by the time he is sixteen or they will kill him off. Perhaps it is different for girls and homosexuals, less so than for lesbians than for gay young men, which may come as a surprise except when you think it through and look at the science. We have no reason to ponder at the number of mentally ill, who are mentally ill because they got socially ill because of these disproportionately weighted and biased social requirements. Those requirements are complemented by the forceful bureaucracy of policing and observing human beings as if they were nothing more than illiterate but externally readable behaviors, tangible items that can be labeled and indexed and stored and retrieved, and the physical counterpart, the human body, locked up somewhere: (nowhere is there a more tragic representation of this than in contemporary American letters, I couldn't let this one go). That's the tragedy that we are kind enough to give to ourselves. We think we are so tidy when we are acting in the most untidy fashion, kindred to no one. It seems that to be that shy child again you need to get an internally focused consensus of self for the different parts of your brain, and whatever aspects of memory that may come into play, because they definitely will. It is a doable feat. The dense sly phrases of the unthinking elites, the real criminals, are a scourge. Look at how they slyly do it. How heavy a price we pay. I am fortunately able to say this without swearing under my breath, which means I have words still, some words to go yet to build up that prison. The meme would suggest that I could then tear it down, that that would be what would be expected of the next sequence in the genre of grievance. That would be to misunderstand me. It is not a failure to realize deconstruction at any price, or even at a given price, because those prices are indifferent to external influences, they are absolute and must be paid, like doing time, very much like doing time, it is something else though. This thing that suggests its presence in us, like bats on a total insect spree, it is anti-enervating, but it is able to slow, like a parishioner taken for a deer in a deer park, totalized and frozen out of his spiritual wits. That could perhaps spell a permanent state. When I was a child, shy but acceptant of new things, and of things that were different, I was somehow observant, but not prodigally so – no, it came as a result of the other things. My mother and I were on one of our trips, and we stopped at a camping lot at the Russian river. The parking lot was in a deep forest shade, the trees reached to the sky, and there was a biker family, father, mother, and child. They appeared to be there alone, enjoying life. Like she always did, my mother struck up a conversation with them, we had no sense of making distinctions across social lines, we were not of that at all, which means that we were in and of a different world for many years as we traveled across the Northwest, hocking one school for another each year. The couple was very open, I remember the smiles of warmth towards us, the openness in speaking, almost the desire to speak with us actually simply because they desired to speak to some people. They told us directly and without a sense of desperation or in any downbeaten or slowed up way or in need of anything extra, they explained to us that their son, who could not have been

more than nine or so, whose head was bald and very scarred, had taken a fall from one of the bikes not so long ago. He had broken his skull, but was in fine shape, no damage to the brain or to anything else, just some scars remaining. This always happened to us. People telling us everything about themselves, we were very good listeners. I was spoken to like an adult, and I carried on to try to behave and return my speech and body language accordingly. It became expected of me over the years, though it was never spoken. I spent a lot of time near rivers, and often swam. That was how we lived. But I had a skull too, and some reaper out there was waiting to give me the bill which I would have to pay for the demands which I had to fulfill as a shy child who had to be like an adult. When the reaper came in my early twenties, he cut hard and he cut deep. Broke my skull by breaking my psychological makeup of a permanent adult: for that part was destroyed. The collateral damage to the other separate but interacting parts of my self and my brain was devastating. Then prison came, the prison of American institutions, all of an ilk, and all of them. It is hard to believe that people's institutions, which are also institutions of the state, can de-ice themselves to such a degree that they creatively destroy a person. That was the reaper, the collective machete. That was when I began to notice the newspaper articles especially, the television scenes, of real crime and punishment in America. Rape, murder, armed robbery, assault, battery, all of it, all of the violence that was absolute and not relative like fraud or bribery or extortion or what have you. That was the period when I read Mailer and Capote, and found deep succor in the academic promotion of law as literature, and the specific genre that Capote and Mailer had, it seemed, given birth to with a similar conceptual vein: writing as journalism, or journalistic accounts of crime and punishment, real life, case histories, as you will (as each man, woman, and child burned up and blown around and torn apart, or vaporized completely in Nagasaki were case histories, unique and never to be repeated). Unfortunately it did not save me. It was both too late and too early. I was not ready for the medicine that I needed: the disease had engulfed me before the cure was socially developed enough or psychologically penetrating enough to apply to such a young mind. An older mind was needed, and I did not have one: the adult child had been a child's adult which is altogether something different. The accounts in the newspapers and the television swamped me, I had no defenses. The shy, necessarily observant and adult child was beginning to turn into a monster terrified of the fears and ripening obsessions that made him so. That's the American prison. That's what ties you up and puts a white sheet on the ground for you to die on. Old beds in the homes of relatives, terrifyingly lonely and unequipped rented rooms in the homes of other people, and the unabiding feed of what had almost overnight become my own obsessive-compulsive person, still too shy to heal. Writing is like anti-sex. It's no wonder that often enough male writers have different requirements of a woman than other men do when they get into bed with her. When you get used to anti-sex (writing) you get used to consequences, and a woman is a fascinating being to men, if not also to herself: is fascinating in any case. The combination of the writer male or female and woman is so obvious that perhaps it should go unstated (as if a document could be partially bastardized by doing so, having no father-stem, and the stubbornly conservative gentile prizes of the literati were no more than a function of one's paired poet of the opposite sex. O girl let me fuck

you good so that I can write): still, the stains of sex on mattresses and sheets leave a record that is a consummation devoutly to be hoped for, that is how good it is, in all truth.

I rubbed lotion on her shingles as she cried out, "You are a good man, you are moral." The subterranean flows can carry me everywhere, they can carry me outside of the prison walls and into the walls of a woman's home, her very womb – less certain than that I will die, or that she will die, but the coming together in that instance is real and defiant. As two men box, one, two, and hold on to one another paused in determining the next time and place of the enviable footwork and the singular trajectories of arms and hands, the homosexual gene common between them, swells the clitorises of female spectators, and the sports writer forms plans to bed the one that catches his eye in the crowd and whose eye catches his typewriter. It is easier than rape for her as well. Kilgore Trout said, 'I just effin write.' He didn't need to envision anti-sex as the blood-red corollary that is prose, because he just effin wrote it, but he was going to vote: he was sadly desperate. That was the way the tarot cards were able to draw him out, and rend him through the dray fields. A man like Trout spends a lifetime refusing and then getting used to not being summed up, never votes either, probably out of indifference and no special commitment. That night after meeting with his friend Vonnegut, telling him that maybe it was time he (Trout) start being complicit and vote, he drifted into the ruthless drudge world of alcoholics, only he never did get the chance to vote. He killed himself at midnight after the tarot messages were read out to him by an alcoholic tarot reader who he picked up like a disease at an AA meeting (he wasn't an alcoholic). KT: Deceased, shortly before the 2004 presidential elections. Too bad he didn't just effin write and effin ##### like he was used to. It's nice that Vonnegut related the story, a kind of thing to remember Trout by. How's that prison going? We've got word prisons, a lot of them. The ultimate logical consequence of racism is genocide. There is no other word for 'racism' in the Indo-European language compound ('bigotry' just doesn't cut it); but the idea is constantly subject to birth by creation (National Socialism). That's not true for 'sexism,' which is used by analogy to 'racism' and other isms. There are words for it: misogyny, gynophobia, or the Latin *horror feminae*. But the ultimate logical consequence of *horror feminae*, even if it is not the stated or the consciously wrought goal of the aggressive biogroup, is also mass murder, or gendercide. China; it is present in the Congo, to my knowledge. Indo-European language trap meets the American prison and the overseas alien tribunals, the American rape rate and child abduction rate, sundry kill and battery rates. But there is a hope from heaven, and it is Mrs. Moore: 'Mrs. Moore! Mrs. Moore! . . . Mrs. Moore! Mrs. Moore!' Had I been able to be with her, then in her disposition at sea, the final and enervating pall of her life, I may have been completely saved, beforehand: and hence in the after-come. There's so much base knowledge that we seem never able to tap, much less get a hold of. Reality hits and we can't go wrong with reality when we've got the base knowledge. Problem is, we don't: It's like the lily reeds in Diego's paintings, they haunt more than they ought to. We've got very special ghosts. We've got very special walls. If a language is so cumbersome because it cannot remain consistent throughout a needed breath of psychoanalysis, then what of prison? More than silence has to remain: more than

some stupid event horizon posited by the creepy moths at the universities – éminence grises propagating much more than a meme of social control but extending from the hygiene factor endemic to prisons and camps to the implant of a gene that encodes obligate-parasites such as ricketts. Then we'll all have typhus, not just the physically barriered prisoners, not just the institutionally incarcerated. People will figure: let's rape while we still can, let's sabotage prose, let's plant the upheaval of literary security: They've already done it, the gene is as good as complete – it's a *fait accompli* and people aren't so stupid that they can't sense it. Let's rape while we can, nothing to lose – the moths love it. Barbed wire and empty soda cans under the bridge on the damp ground – it is a diseased place to sleep, yet people sleep there, and therefore urinate and defecate there, and spit, and so on. Ricketts: typhus, derived from the aerial arthropod vector continuum of virus transmission, of which ricketts is one – without the vitamin D to surrender your soul to, your soul becomes that which it has to become: diseased, from the body, both diseased, it's not a clear cut matter between the two. Because vitamin D intake, and that intake which we do get that also gets protected by our immune system – in this hard world – is less certain than death, is less certain than that we will die. The hardcoded thread between the intake and its associate deficits and mortal certainty is there to see, to behold even: it is not controversial. But there are men who would make it so, men who would make all such things so if they had the chance: irrational needle heads whose minds wouldn't be able to succumb to basic syllogisms or the fundamental propositions in logical texts even if they formed the desire to do so: another disease, another wreck, another destruction of the pen, the typewriter, the keyboard: another destruction of the real and very much needed intent of the writer – which is to talk honestly about prison, about every prison that belongs to him and about every prison that belongs to others, so that those that belong to others he makes his own for the time being, and will not let them go until he has penetrated them – to do it with sincerity; to chalk up the dead as courteously as possible in his quiet hours, nights if that is what is needed (with the company of the owl perhaps) and then remember them as well as he can, to give them freedom (to release them from the wheel and the haunted loci), to tell of the freedom he has been given by them (grist for everything, the knowledge that the dead have that everything is grist – unhinged from cycles, unbound by fiats, unnerved by icons). More he cannot do for them, and it is a sad but true tiding that there is not much more he can do for man – as if this were not enough, which it is not, as if he didn't write from the soil-roots of empathy that are life, which may elude until the end. Young soldier said: "I would say that the only reason I changed is because Iraq changed." An owl swoops down on his words the moment they get heard; they get clawed but resist being torn apart. Then they get torn apart. The TV watchers isolate that unique knowing that the soldier told of before his image on the screen can move on to the next frame. He gets cut off even as the frames roll on, even as the camera keeps its glance fixed on him for a few more moments. If he gets killed they'll bring him home to American soil under the cover of night by way of a military transport plane: they think he's pall-bait to the people, latency with the potential to agitate; a body bag isn't enough to keep him out of sight, it is not enough to keep him from talking. They allow him to be eradicated. From the beginning he is not part of their biogroup

(a biogroup that we have no right to eradicate, if eradication means erasing traces of its existence, moral existence or physical existence, and the changeable but invariant measures between them). These are basic things, crudely told, unevenly written about – the hunters string up their kill on crudely wrought hammocks stretched across the insides of a small circle of trashed and starved young trees; they dump their carcasses there: things that they have gutted. It is no miracle that the trashed young starved trees bear the chaos of these rabid people; it is simply no surprise. . . it's the crudest form of anti-sex that's being written out now, I should apologize but I can't. There is no lineage of gentry to my unknown provenance, parried by even the greenest of valleys – unknown because it is unknown, knowing that there is no gentry in it because of a metempsychosis that buries prose's weight in telling it but can't kill off what's left, which is unstated. This is the debit and chalk-up that Gide bored himself to death with while writing his *Journals*. It is what failed his self-ennervation in *The Counterfeiters*. Nothing can fail in the presence of that kind of failure, where classroom desks are pornographic because they suggest coitus on-all-fours and the blackboards scrape as the poet scrapes for the mind that killed him first – which is all that's left. Thank God this isn't poetry, there shall be no dissertations here – no sudden crises, no superordinate plans, however humble, and however groveling; no extraordinary rendition of the private heath, no coronations, no gilded awards of establishment grade – but medals for the Olympic athletes and the cross-country runners and certificates of merit for courage and swimming and the different varieties of physical and mental skills for young scouts, who are by their nature just children, not villains, not the fixed crop of our future soldiers (who are to be respected as all human beings are), no stereotyping of them by the faux liberal establishment, who have vanquished liberalism to their shame and to our detriment, leaving the field wide open to the Vulcans. If we make rash mistakes when we are children which are innocent but are punished for it, it is no wonder that we step up the ladder years later and err without innocence, probably still shy and terrified but knowledgeable as children never are – and are punished for it. These are real categories which the law will not take into account. These basic things need to be recycled every few hundred years or so and we are overdue. Bob Marley maintained direct knowledge of this fact as far as I can tell, from his music, and from the footage I've been able to see, and truly I do mean that and I say it with what I consider unfettered and unafraid sincerity; I have informed myself on the basic historicism of the kernel-systems that aided him in and made it possible for him to believe what he did believe. He made some reference to that knowledge of a need to recycle what becomes detritus over and after a few centuries in many of his songs, after all he wanted to beat off the barbed sticks of the colonial past still informing the aspects of his life and ours, lest we forget. The Rastafarian knew more than you or me, he succumbed to the best piece of land he knew which was the land that he made in song, believed in in his mind, and with the carry-over aerials (like the osprey or the condor) to his fellow man, who gave him back as much as he gave out to them, which is after all the great thing. Listening to the music makes me at least forget every possibility of Gide's more than mild obsession with his birth date and his perceived meaning of its cusp-existence, its unique furrow in that old, mean-spirited wheel – about which I feel no need to go into further detail. Gide

gave and took, but what he gave out did not return to him in that stream, what he took he took from other streams, in other words he stole, he did not give anything for it, he didn't pay. Those are essential differences. If these truths are too basic or menacingly raw or appear to be coveted by me for the sake of who knows what, then I declare myself uninterested. I still have words, I am certainly in a race against death but who his not. Without words I would consider myself a prostitute to a system, to a nexus of systems, gout-dumb, sheep-fed, and too hungry for my own good. A real back-door man with a front-door attitude, gritting his teeth like a jealous miser who doesn't know the difference between what he loves and what he hates, and so spends most of his time in embittered rankling with neighbors and strangers alike – a man who likes his letters delivered by UPS, probably not his only endearing virtue. The sad but fascinating fact is that he knows he is being sold down the river by men more powerful than him, thus his redemptive attachment to UPS. Even without words there is hope for me – I would end up in The Park of Remorse in Cuba, with the difference from the others there that I didn't want to go anywhere else, but lie there and watch the crushed adults circling and the carefree children playing.

When we have the energy, we don't have the wisdom, when we have the wisdom, we don't have the energy. An evolutionary wrinkle. Very coercive. Substitute remorse for wisdom, and wisdom for remorse. But don't substitute play for energy. As a writer, I am the sum of my writers, I can count them out on my fingers; it will take a pretty long time, but I can do it. Being the sum I am not equal to them. That is another essential difference: I am my own under the laws of equality – it is a merciful vision and fact that all seed-concepts are divulged in a piece of literature: it is the only dynamo that the writer has, and writers apply it in an almost infinite variety of ways. Like letters sent by UPS in the highest sense, it's a stream of original impregnations of the receiver. The writer receives as much as his reader, as much he receives from his reader as his reader receives from him, as much as his subjects of interest receive he receives from them. It is a benign loop. When one stream gets broken off in the returning direction, it is not benign, nor is it neutral: it is a sad demise: it is "lacking the countenance of our friends," as Yeats said. It is very interesting the way the world is set up with respect to the universalism of our seed-concepts: the world takes very little into account of literatures' divulgence of them, it takes very little account of how thoroughly it divulges and the way it does that. But that is in the worst of times, in the best of times the world occasionally listens, and shuts its camps down. Reforms its prison systems and its penal codes, and their modes of implementation. It is the ultimate breakdown of our iconologies in seemingly permanent states of misery. Guilt by association is one of the first casualties, and in the best of times, it is so on all fronts. In America the courts extend moratoriums on capital punishment, and with luck a higher critique of the electric chair will be written up, and the life of punishment and the punishment of life will be re-adjudicated in line with that – it is not a complicated proposition. I countered several rivers in US territory, I was a strong swimmer and still am. But I could *live* then, the country was different then. Art was not made under the conduction of academic séances. Treachery played no inherent leading role yet (and if it did, it shouldn't have). Liberalism still had enough grit and good millers in it that the old and

venerable gentile prizes were still attainable – still attainable and at reach, speaking in particularistic and more basic or general terms. (The reader may interpret.) The electric chair could still be critiqued, and it was. The Texas governor was still high on cocaine or recovering as far we know. There is no foul here; I deserve no penalty. I have been straight. I have made no use of pejoratives. I am not virtuous but I venerate the good telling of things, if you will allow me to tell it that way. There are not many things as close to the earth as decadence, and I reserve the right be decadent and to write decadently – each to his own. And I will let the dead bury their own dead out of respect for the respectable group and out of a certain willed indifference to the disrespectable group – better than that I cannot find it in myself at this point to do, and if I could I am still apparently not willing to subscribe to it. This is the way things are. I'm not going to pull them down. The payments are already absolute, and life has already been very historical, so the future is wide open. Let's critique the electric chair. That's a starter. Consider it half-precursor and half-blueprint, more precursory intent – Stendhal's way. I will be as radical as required by this document. The world is set up in the way a camp is set up – from a distance everything is a series and varying combination of interacting parts, mutually indifferent to one another; one's private hell becomes succor and yearning. Smooth talking pimps, bruised and battered and record-leaving (authorial) prostitutes (stained sheets: recorded signatures of the methods of her prostration that get washed away in the weekly laundry as books are burned), stuttering geniuses, AIDS, the real-time satellite thermo-imaging of population flows in the Congo by NASA for Bechtel; the subsequent manipulation of their respective movements on the ground, and the death-men on the ground pointed in the directions of agendas that they only partly own, and the death and the rape and human dispersal that comes of it, and the imperial flows of the corporate centurions into the mineral bases now that the fields are cleared and the ethnics wasted. There is much to be said here, but I cannot get myself to say the worst of it, it is beyond what my mind will allow me to type out right now; more than any of us want to know, but as much as some of us do. The knowledge might cause us to split off from ourselves, and perhaps it has already. Perhaps it is like that. Perhaps I am a symbol of it, a representative of that split, because for the life of me I can't write it out. For no other reason could I be that split: my personal birthday is not important to me, for a long time I have considered it merely a sensation of something that never happened, it's so irrelevant that it signifies nothing for me (perhaps there is nothing special about that). If there is something special about it, the difference is that life has too soon become historical for me, a means to a document. . . an end. There is a stimulus inside of existence somewhere that *cannot not* allow me to become a reference point for an all-encompassing argument against simply one thing: Power's on-going destruction of all certainly and likely aspects of human beings. The argument absorbs and reflects and details as perhaps no other documentary element or thing has ever done. An indictment, if you will, but something so at-last relevant to the nature, to the cause, and to the effect – these things that human beings find themselves involved in, that power would be shown to be a *merely contingently fit* biological quota of privileges, arbitrarily set-up each time that they get set-up. I cannot pay lip-service to words, and so I cannot apologize for the appearance of a price being

paid for the deconstruction. For it is only an appearance. Oceans only continue. Carbon may be limited, but I doubt it. Everything that makes death more certain than that we will sleep with a particular woman or a particular man, with no reason to forego the bursts of lusts' early and exuberant embraces and pre-seminal fluids, is either absolute or has more power than us – is a part of the quota system, for which we pay no price but that of our own growing. What would we do without our private hells? Maybe nothing. Maybe a level-nothing. In more than one way we are planer organisms with no need of extras, living off of the dirt of some older elemental trust – as elementary as basic sums, reading, and writing, more elementary than that (it could not have been other than elementary). I would grasp her to me. I would take her in my arms like Errol Flynn might have done, only to find (would you have known) that I am more suicidal than her, more drawn to the ocean at night – with the old non-chalance of a gifted but crushed Hollywood actor still robed from the day in peaceful and alcohol-muting white, bearing it off with the backstretching of his arms almost avidly but not quite, just as he climbs into the waves, arms forward. When she was away on errands during the day he had lain on the couch in the large living room – his testicles dropping out onto the upholstery and stripped of their wrath, he had held his breath for several moments. He would not have known about Guantanamo: About the dark-skinned man being kicked by black boots and clubbed with white batons, leg-ankles dangling on the floor like snails that have had their shells taken off of them – the unmoronic American soldiers from Appalachia, the mid-west, and other parts, de-schooling themselves in the starter sentences, the middle sentences, and now in the totalizing denouements (which a denouement should never be). She's so far way now, the fragile synthesis that Mary Jane had been able to give to him as she herself fell away. She disappeared into some other abyss in the dray darkish fields of the American heartland, maybe where kingfishers split the water and parry the unwanted tows and riptides of the cities, then he shipped off to Iraq. I have to come back to the American prison. We have so much to be grateful to George W. Bush for. We can now think of the American prison as a moral conception, or as a physical system of incarceration and punishment institutions, or as a single place which we call by a simple name derived from the local environment or town or ranch or what have you; and we can think about someone – a Texas governor as purveyor and ultimate executioner (did not he call himself "The Decider"?) of men and women on death-row in Texas, some having repented in the name of Christ and having said as much, and some for whom a complete moratorium on capital punishment would have been justifiably, and even necessarily, implemented. And we can survey the extension of not only the practices and methods of that State's prisons and prison staff, but also of the well-fitting mental habits and decision-making processes of the gov – to another place, a place normally beyond our conception altogether, moral or otherwise, a place called Abu Ghraib. I could tell some stories about the man when he was the gov in Texas. Stories altogether founded and true. But they are indexed in the archives of the newspapers and on the internet. He is, as they say, history – one not be repeated. These days I like to just half-comprehend things, not enter the full cycle of the thought, but not to abandon it, not to let it go without pulling the fundamentals out of it: like when little children are walking along the beach or anywhere else, with a daycare

guide or someone other, I like only to let-up for the half-sorted-out but nonetheless clear comprehension of their, the children's, potential as human beings not having to suffer war as victims or makers, and the other shades of grey in between of which there are many, just a quiet appreciation of the fact, the very fact itself, unobtrusive, its presence felt and known – just like looking at the glory of the grey cliffs in Yosemite, or even in Tenerife, maybe after a long life, at 40, especially in Tenerife. Where should our Marines actually be? If we had our priorities only 1/100th straight they would be guarding the remaining poached populations of mountain gorillas in the Congo and Nigeria from the trophy-trade of body parts and the faceless and wanton massacre of a complete family group; the contrary biogroup being the complex web of cached men in the service of ethnic militias in the service of defunct state armies and every combination or disattachment and convenient decouplings and recouplings. If we lose the gorillas unfortunately we will not have sealed our own fate either; if this sounds like featherbreeding rot, then the thought is free to be burned, else, I suspect, not. It is worth looking into. Are we so naïve as to think that the satellite imaging contracted by Bechtel from NASA; the little Trumans Foster Dulles's sitting in some anesthetically deceptive board room with the use of Canon or Fujifilm photoelectric technology for the demonstration to the titans of the population movements on the ground into the national parks, is not known of by Cheney, Schultz, Baker, Bush Sr., other Bushes, et. al and company? Come. Chomsky, whom I admire not, has said that these very people and their like and ilk have consciously as a group decided to let most of Africa simply perish from AIDS and hunger. It is worse than that, and that would be the heart of darkness that Chomsky never goes deep enough into to even care about, for he truly doesn't and is congenitally incapable of it; his mind has no such sense of intricacy, his is the mandarin and his is the manufacturer of consent in his own academic domain just as those whom he accuses of those attributes, the inquisitor that he really is. That is dangerous for the populations on the ground in Africa since we listen to an old, cranky man, who has no offer of moral guidance or sense for detail. Even private, casual words among friends and associates, as Bechtel Sr. noted, can be unsuspectingly effective and often suffice entirely at this level; and as often as not are to be found lettered in company policy statements and directives in greater quantity and more distinctive quality than in their business models, for good reason: the use of euphemisms and pejoratives, often defined by negation when the negation has already occurred by the dictionary definition of those two words. That is the slyness with which such things are written and employed and then jargonized for and by the respective group. It keeps the guiding notions and principles and directives more effective and untranslatable and opaque to others outside of the group. I want to make a number of things clear. Yesterday's intrusion into Syrian territory by the American military was declared a success by the American government, but was declared a "terrorist act" and a "war crime" by the Syrian government, specifically its foreign minister in London as he was preparing for talks with the British government. I want to recount the following for the record. The press is today reporting *that Syria is reporting* that several civilians including "some" (other times referred to as "two" by the Western press) children were killed. Yesterday afternoon however the BBC reported that the "few international journalists attending the funerals" were

“reporting the same numbers” and according them the same distribution of age groups. That’s now in the record, I’m done, there is no room for the memory-hole now, and the international journalists at the funerals are known quantities. When I was working as a contracted software consultant for several months in Saudi Arabia I was on site in Al Jubail. This is the place where the blown-out Iraqi tanks from the First Gulf War were shipped to for forwarding. They had been blown-out completely by American missiles with the hard uranium metal type that is the thick exterior of their head, to penetrate the cabin and come out the other side as a hole with the delimited circumference approximate to the open vagina of an elephant, with the human beings inside already pulverized. This resulted in depleted uranium confounding its presence as tiny particles of dust in and around and on the blown-out frames, the soil, the air, which flows. There is footage on the internet of men on the tarmac jetty of the Al Jubail port moving and dressed in white mopsuits and head-and-mouth-cover and white plastic stretch-gloves, clone-like receiving the tortured and contaminated metal tortoisés onto the massive concrete docks just in from the jetty. This is where I worked, ten years after the 1993 footage which had been two years after the war. The smell of the ammoniac and chlorine burn-off from the night was rancid in the morning there, every morning, you had no choice but to suck the stuff in since it was the only oxygen available, and people had died there in that city because of it. I had a source, a Saudi friend. I had to cover my nose and my mouth when I walked from the company provided SUV to the sandy, droll and evil offices. Three-hundred-and-sixty miles round trip each day, the death-carrion of dogs swiped off the madmax desert highways and onto the side-bars of the roads, religious and industrial police patrolling the concave pool-like and massive indentions in the ground under and around and banking up towards the truly desolate overpasses, the deadly highways where half a car on the sand-bar on the right or on the left of road was the basic rule. There were no photographs allowed in the Kingdom, and that rule was especially sensitive in a key industrial and former American military port zone like Al Jubail. As with photographs, so with Crosses. On the stops along the daily morning and afternoon journeys for gas at Ras Tanura’s Indian laborer living-death-station, sleeping in the garages and urinating and defecating and even showering on the same floor basin of the tiny cement hut lavatory located out towards the sand, which is where I urinated every morning, observing the relatively neat hygiene of combined shower and latrine and sink and drinking fountain; as I stood there, my penis in my hand and with great relief urinating the coffee out that I had sipped crossing the King Fahad Causeway, and onward through Khobar into the western desert but north along the tapline, I felt yet with a consciousness of a simultaneous anti-enervation of my physical health that I knew could not last forever and would come back to get me in some way from this place, and the skewedness of observations and experiences of absolute foreignness, while yet fascinated with the real surviving and true acceptance what your eyes tell you, I felt life, to that necessary degree *only*. That is the difference. That is the future of a choke-hold. Let me record that the company who was contracting me out to the Saudi company asked me to sign a piece of paper written in Arabic that I had not taken any photographs nor participated in any espionage in Al Jubail. The Saudi manager of the company to whom I was contracted, called me in to his dim but large office and stated to me

"If you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to be afraid of." He was under pressure from the religious and regional state police no doubt to get me to sign, that was obvious. I do not remember what I told him, but I did not sign. He was not an evil man per se, and his voice was soft and gentle and comforting, like so many other Saudis there. But he was capable generating and setting in motion the consequences of evil and being perfectly aware and probably comfortable with it. I could tell many stories that would thereby be put on public record (I would make sure they got there) about my stay in that Kingdom. But one general statement, that is of a particular time and geographical and human space in my life and the remaining colonial powers including mine, and so deserves concern about our objectives and perceptions – enough said there: the Saudiized American and British expatriates who had settled there were human drones working for Aramco and its parasites. Their presence was the simple presence of the US State Department and its quiet but deliberative branches and outlet stations. These inveterate ones, the ones who had stayed for decades, were married to Filipino wives and they had the mindset of serial killers. They were lazy and ruthless, more ruthless than the hierarchically-driven Sunnis who ruled there, and ruled the Shia in the company by setting discriminatory "grade-level" ceilings on them in the corporate management grid, as one would grade a computer bot: programmed out of the possibility of moving up the ladder above code N, N for number. If by some grand and monstrous coincidence any one or few of those American expatriate traitors (for they were traitors) were to get to a position near or at the highest political echelons in the American government, they would set as their first priority the enslavement of the American people via the totalizing numbness of Orwellian fogs, and that is a fact. They would try to Saudiize America but do so without Islam, as the Bush clan has already come a long way towards accomplishing. Otherwise these other American expatriate fiends would simply return to urban sprawls like Sacramento where their incognito would be sufficient for them to manage multiple and serial murders and rapes and abductions. This is the truth and I do not place it up for debate; I reserve the right to be criticized or annulled or lambasted or torn-up or ripped-up by writers or critics or journalists or politicians or whomever, or murderers or assaulters, but I set a standard of argumentation that I retain in the space and the gravity of basic ontogenies, unable to be riven by gulls as long as their writer lives. Like a dragon to its rider when their rider dies or is silenced by some form of annulment or the absolute of death, the ontogenies are adoptable, they are adoptable in any case. I record that I met more good and decent and well-meaning and well-intending Saudis in Saudi Arabia than I met one American or British expatriate employed there of whom the same could be said – for there were absolutely none; and I was exposed socially and in labor to an equal number of both. That is indicative, and allows this movement into the public record and public domain to re-take history, to re-settle it with the real intention of the writer (whose intention is neither to produce literary or intellectual statelessness nor forced or coerced migration or any manner of marginalization), which is what we have to do – and then move on, conscious and instinctively committed nomads, yes, by that means, the means and the habits of the nomad, to reign in the forged balance sheets of history, intellectually ill-funded to bear a true account and reckoning of the chart off accounts at the heart of our universe, as

far as we will ever be able to know it. Perhaps it is the case that at a deeper level my thoughts are not important except in so far as they correspond at perhaps a deeper level with the unending ocean of musings that human beings quantize with their every living moment, like in Mark 8 where Jesus says he sees men as trees. I bathed in ash as a child, holding myself up in the dry fireplace with my toys shoring me in; here my parents found me; I went down to the running mud creek at the bottom of the embankment at our house in Glenwood Glade, and covered my body with mud there; I went on a hike up into the hills with an older boy who was later hit by a car and we found a dead skunk, which was badly odorous and swam upon the winds for a while as a septic-tank might, heavy though it may be. I fell asleep on the kitchen counter, I fell asleep everywhere, I was a dazed and shy and sleepy little pugh child at five years old, on that Halloween I was Winnie the Pooh. When our poodles, Chanson and the other one, were found poisoned dead by garden chemicals in our little lane of bushes along side the single level ranch house, my mother blamed my father for planting the poison. I learned of this blame at that time or later as the years passed, it does not matter now, for the memory is not surpassable if it ever was. But it was so: I am certain my father did this, I have reasons. I have synthesized everything I have ever read, and everything that I have ever written, one with the other, the other with the one, each to its own beginning and to be at an end someday, and obeying the laws of God, and God said, "I will send you a Protector, the Spirit of Truth, which does not enter into the world; and he will teach you all things." It was thus in Berkeley when I looked over at a man walking on the other side of the street (there was the California sun brightening the sidewalks that day) that I saw his spirit move with his mind, as a literal item, quantifiable had there been some special being to measure it. It was an elemental growth which probably threw Moses when he lived; rather as gnomes hitherto undecided as to their descent to the weights of man's quantizing, now decided and descending and breaking the uncreated light for a momentary seethe of ravishments and relishes. I cannot say more about it. I do not know more about it. In writing this I have to be careful to move away from it for a while when it feels like it is tackling too much of my energy. This I have to keep in mind. I need intake from outside of this document which is my measured response to the world. I ask you, how can any man or woman afford to make anything other than measured responses to the world? Can they afford the chaos of the Texan's hell – this man's Mansonesque mind of horrors and its acts? He has presided over tens of thousands of deaths, and the likelihood is that it is more, and it is a natural event in the world that we will never know the exact sum. He is of no kin and of no kind to me. Although I never consented to the marriage, I have divorced him, I have willed it as a companion-declaration from my respective cell in the American prison (I promise that I will write it out and submit it to lawyers, this is not an extension of a metaphor), myself my own cellmate as I go out onto the prison yard track and run the mile faster than any man has ever run it; and then hurl the stopwatch into the sun; quiet but never again indifferent, my hair and the muscles in my legs and the endurance in my chest my own, never again susceptible to a governor, a warden, or a committee. I want to see the venerable institutions of learning shown for what they are: havens. Havens for individuals and classes who have orchestrated the unnatural and unafforded value on their papers of

certificate and membership, which they have moved into the parts of the law that makes unnecessary and undeserved profit and privilege for them: we cannot afford this, we never could; it is what grown men and women have held on to for five hundred years. For the highly venerable institutions the respective classes have over time orchestrated the continuation of the orchestration. The natural pale is violated as long as this continues. This should be a capsule and a cocoon for a legal ontogenesis, which is but bred and continued from a time before the writing of this and immemorial, and if it is not in my time, then I let it hold out to another generation, it will hold out in any case. I will lay waste to the heavens without hurting a soul. I will not have to subdue anyone, no one will have to subdue any one, and nothing will be done on my behalf, for I am not at such a level of importance. This book is inoperative to genre; it is not pure fiction, it is not pure drama, pure journal or diary, pure poetry (that much is clear), nor pure non-fiction or biography, or novel – whatever that may mean now. With these words a fiat. I divorce my life from the existence of George W. Bush. With these words a fiat. I divorce humankind from him. He's finished. There shall be moments of grace and relief by tearful grieving with his end, with his exit; and the hardened shyness of our lives and our selves, abetted by a civil death that was thrown upon us, will take one or more of many roads, that much is obvious . . . but the man's personal highway to hell with us is over, we're dropping this cocaine addict hitchhiking in the desert with the hubris of squaw demons haunting him to his grave, which will be un-resultant and reviled. You cannot imagine that day? It will come; someday you will not need to believe in ghosts, you will know all of them. A good, well-told document can bring people back to life as it was before the omens of an oncoming pale started their menacing séances with us. Only ghosts believe in ghosts; but those of us who know, who know the ghosts as a matter of course in life, are unworn from birth; we reject the believers, whose minds are carried along not by thought and life but by excuses for them or against them, excuses. We send the Marathoner, who has not executed the warden or the commissioner's wife (for that is the writer's thought not his), we send him to rescue the writer, the man with the pencil, the pen, the keyboard, the scratches on paper and electronic parchment, the man without a watch who tries to tell the time, who lives on the sea, above the sea, in from and out of the sea, but cannot walk, as the Marathoner can. The Marathoner never talks to me, he lets me watch him, his hewn but humble glide, that is not quite a glide, but something more of a wrestled antelope turned into a tiger by a god, the humility and the strength of him. So he guides me, by letting me watch him run. It does not look as if even he ever attains a runner's high, it does not appear that it is something operable to his knowledge of his terrestrial life, such as it is, such as is ours; in that sense his walking is like mine, I have something in common with him that is as essential as a minimum quantity of a specific vitamin substance to the body. No wands, no batons, an affirmation of sweat and the man-out that he was, confined to himself and no other, now an example of a lettered sustenance, he has helped me. I do not know if he has saved me. It is dependent on my level of depression, it is not absolute but it seems so sometimes in moments of repose and contemplation on prison yards and the sun and the weights and the tattoos, and the rapes, the spoon-knives, the belated carrions – which is like a repeated morning sickness when the repose is lost, vodka and tomato juice for breakfast

every morning, with white, sickened bread, Sickle-cell anemia, the lice and tuberculosis and opium-addiction of the Russian soldiers sent off to Afghanistan thirty years ago, American soldiers captured by the Viet Cong, shipped off to the constancy of the Russian Archipelagos to rot in experimentation wards and labor camps and asylums: The American prison, Nixon with ours and Carter with theirs' would have no less. That is the straight telling of things, beleaguered as the prose is, as black and white as your faked righteousness could ever want it to be, without sources, without footnotes, they're to be found in dreary archives and homely corners. Here is what the commander of the armed forces of Columbia said some days ago in relation to cases of human rights abuses involving civilian 'kills' perpetrated by his soldiers, versus 'kills' that result not in immediate death but in coercion by torture: "A terrorist converted into an informant is useful as long as he or she lives." That's his alternative to killing vagrants and manual laborers to register them as 'kills' for his quota and benefits system (paid leave by the killer soldier, etc.). I won't use irony here as a discriminating tool as there is no need for the deconstruction of his words and his mentality. Further to that, we move on, to adjust our surroundings: Iraq 2005, Brigadier General Janis Karpinski is used as a scapegoat without being charged for orchestration or foreknowledge or involvement in the war crimes at Abu Ghraib, not even yielding a false positive, demotion approved and then permitted by George W. Bush in April of that year, Rumsfeld's acts erased from testimony, Karpinski replaced by former head of Camp X-Ray at Guantanamo Bay: the American Prison, *in toto*. A writer can't choose his topics, they choose him, his subjects, his themes, his selves, it is not avoidable; I cannot choose where I write or the quantity, and of qualities I leave that to philosophers and the standby assassins: the person-killers too lame to let biological blood, they bloodlet in name only providing the dumb Texas reaper and the spinning circles of the Vulcans cover for their real-life atrocities of blood that flows as liquid: I have obtained my runner, I have set-out the prison, I have lamed the establishment, which is not established, and the sickness of my diaries is fundamental, cannot be denied, as my runner cannot be denied, as my interrogation cannot be denied, as my healing is like the white water chutes in large American rivers calming downstream to the quantized wavelets and rapids; knifed into being like the flowing mind of the Birdman had to knife the guard at Alcatraz that he may live on to write a book on this history of Federal Penitentiaries in America, which is no excuse and no apology, I hold no stock with those notions. I do not care what a mean reader says, as little as I care about what writers say. I must remain a realist and humble so that I am careful enough to ensconce the evolving intentions of what I want to write. God please help me to stay sane, to disencumber the blue psychotic winds by breaking out the stories in my mind and sweating out the wild encumbrances of them in my body. I wanted to use one of Eisenhower's propositions, that "freemen everywhere" should not forget that the weight of the *pack* to the soldier is not as heavy as the *chains* are to the prisoner. That's a multi-edged knife. It includes the knifing into consciousness that our prisons are event horizons draped with the blithe ghost town palls (the army and the police) curtaining off every chance for a resurrection of America's dead and gone conscience, that weirdest of constructions. When those event-pales get violated by the FBI or the ATF or the NSA or the IRS or the ISI or the Treasury or the

CIA (which they do, the recidivists that they are), we can count on it that as historical archives are locked away from us and so truth deprived from us, our personal existence is being usurped. Shoring ourselves up against this ends up *destroying* foreign countries and killing their people and their children. Eisenhower's mind was not gentle. I am paying for this: Those moments of judicious fire need to be hemmed in before they light up the rest of the forest. I cannot maintain the differences, I must break out of that prison and breath sometimes, breath and hurl the stop-watch into the sun after my run, away and out from me, where I walk on the penitentiary grounds; men in bicameral outdoor weightlifting gyms (the equipment is luminous in the sun and the cement glare of the cement walls) are somatically unconscious of outsiders' conceptions of them (they are too busy staying alive inside – which upon much closer inspection shows many modes, none of which are in conflict with any other). That is a great thing, and it is a horrible thing. I am in love with it and I am repulsed by it. I rise to it with the erotic requirements of a deadened but swelling groin, and with the moral conception of the structure of evil attending, like an elephant with a large albino penis, a structural flag that is a rainbow of colors and flies above the sea on a low cliff where the swells crash in from the Atlantic on an island off the coast of North Africa, and you would be happy to die there and forget literature; but there is an aftertaste. Literature is written to change the world, not merely represent it – in doing the one, it does the other. Thirteen years ago I wrote that the literary document needs to be redefined, and stated my intent. I put it in my Diaries, or Histories on Unity, which I wrote in several parts, and tested it there, as I did with all of my thoughts and renderings in that period. I was running a colossal effort at denuding my ego and limiting it to the barest functions required. I was getting away with a massive underground literary effort. I do say that it was colossal because I achieved what had been circulating in my mind for years, and when it came it came suddenly and did not stanch – it was definitely a bleeding. The many books I had intaken over the years I brought to a common understanding in repeated entries, effective genealogies of my world in so far as it was bound to the other world, the 'real world,' whose existence I sought to assure myself of through a nexus of seed-concepts that were available and accessible to me (I cannot use the article 'the' here). I assessed Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Dresden as a structurally moral complex, rife with elemental data to be sought and mined and re-constructed but not taken away. It was something that I wanted to address. I thought there were cases that could be recorded individually, case after case discovered and unearthed. That was my hope, more precisely it was my wish. The wish turned out to be enough – located as an ideal truth and a regular given, it sufficed entirely for me. The set of hypothetical challenges coalesced and I managed the total empathy I had been searching out. I wrote of the denuding of my ego and the embryonic elements that come from this, specifically the resistance to evil that I discovered very soon was endemic to it. I found my embryo. It became central. I wrote nonstop, I wrote of everything. I had Stendhal, Gide, Semprum, Marx, Lukacs, Styron, Solzhenitsyn, Dreiser, Capote, Mailer, Ibsen, Joyce, Tolstoy, Orwell, in my mind as I wrote. I wrote of a basic category in all, of a linguistic assumption of morality. Morality became not what philosophers and many grammarians and like-minded jurists say it is – which vary, but have one thing

in common: that it is existent, be it a modal force or another grammatical derivation or whatsoever. Existence can be denuded and destroyed. It is easy to denude large parts of existence by destroying a small part of it – things fan out, I do not hold this up to argumentation: it is a given. *Morality is creation*. It is not a concessionary resource for philosophers or other minders and miners: it's not cobalt – it's not a corporate asset in the heart of a divided land with divided peoples (the body divided, the heart divided). It is not something that is able to orchestrate genocide in the Congo or in the mind or anywhere else. I say rather, let the bicameral human male break down so far to his core and just prior to the ovens and furnaces of his responses, let him break down that far and let us see how he comes out of it. Include the CEOs and the philosophers and the blighted critics and as many pretenders as you can. Will he take responsibility for the whole aspect of his wrongs? Can he be made that shy while understanding – while accepting, acknowledging – that he is not innocent? Will he be able to sustain the consciousness of prison and incarceration as structural, which is a bashful but coherent and eventually reassuring consciousness? Will he be able *to create*? That is the only way he will come out of it and not die again. I am moving away from this now. The religiosity that comes with intense concentration on what one considers to be the flags of consciousness is engrossing, and therefore exhausting. And it is always a possibility that a man is being a fool or that he is being made a fool of. I don't own any of this. None of this is mine ... certain things are very basic, being a fool is just part of it. God bless the fools. Get back to your center, fool. Investigate auditory hallucinations in oral histories by reverting to Rowan Oak and the hard canvassing of alcohol and language and a man begging and receiving at the local asylum shock therapy on and off again for years, that relieving of himself in his pants and castigating his country's past and its resultant present ... by telling all that he can; that and more. Combined with the constant grind of the rails and the steam of the moving train the man chews on hardened and molded bread. Grinding. Girded. Tired. More tired than most men can imagine being. Just wanting a cell to curl up in, and slide into oblivion like a dying fetus. I wonder if that's how it is. I know that's how it is. I know in a way that I never got the chance to learn anything else and still remember. It's the American prison. It is the next repetition of it. It's my structural idiom. I am no less than it, there is a firm equality, I am dug in with it, to die with it an equal death. That is reassuringly dire. It is not a handsome sight. It's the 10th exponent of the war on teen pregnancy, then the war on crime, then the war on drugs, then the war on terror, all the time the fathers warring on their sons, all in a sequence that doesn't kill anymore (Gide's poet is dead also). The scars are so hardened now that a lord of war couldn't make them raw again regardless of his weapon of choice (I have so decreed it). Lord knows. Ghosts may be ancestral but we have genealogies of meditated havens that prefer quiet doses of sexual affection and Siddhartha-gazes: with Jesus Christ, it is the finest thing (a Feuerbachian Marxist would tell it so). A new evolutionary run could prove otherwise, but it is another species and a whole new group of beings that will have to worry about that not us. But in the camaraderie of the tired tirelessness that may be our undoing or that may be our saving grace we can at least wish them well: this species of choice, since for man evolution is not possible because man cannot reflect upon his pre-evolutionary state. It is like the speed of light:

accelerated velocities must be solved, else they would have to be written in a different book. Such a criminal state of perfection we cannot ask more of. If I were a boy again down by the baseball diamond where the dusty valley plateau embanked down to the dried up summer river bed, a long king snake crossing my path, if I were that boy again down at that river, it would have been a blood game (fortunately reincarnation has not been so effective). The tadpoles in their remaining clear water pockets in the dried river floor ... I to this day do not know how it came that they pushed the species forward. I had a blood brother then (we cut our fingers with our pocket knives and pushed our two fingers together and held them so until the drawn blood had mixed to our definition of a proper ritual having been performed), Brad, he was half-Indian, white father and Indian mother. Father an architect, mother I do not know what she did or was about, where she was, but she was not there. Carmel valley. That was a treat. Inland from pacific Carmel to the valley of the 1970s. Hearst, Gilmore, Manson, Lennon's Walls and Bridges, Eastwood. Cocaine and serial abortions: That was Linda. Fifteen years later little Megan (Linda's daughter, tomboy pixie sprite she was then at ten, running through the fern in the valley shades down at the creeks where the hidden bridges evaded the small roadways), who was ten when I was eleven and stroked my little magic wand even then, tried to have me get her pregnant fifteen years later. I wasn't very magical that night, though I did try. Literature is infinite. It is the Spirit of Truth. It is also the Earth. We're like stars there – what need have we of satellites. What need of packaged food. Only needs of habit which tyrannize. Dostoevsky wrote that tyranny is a habit, that the tyrant and the citizen cannot coexist in the same person. Is that not true of bibliographers who junk footnotes and sources for fuzzy search words? It is true of them. I do need a metaphor now. Let me think. Okay. It is not worth it. I can't find one anyway, the ones that I can think of are not pivotal and are crass and envy-ridden. Forget it. We have to respect young people's ignorance when they are ignorant. They're too young to know and that is as it should be. It is too bad that in growing up they have to start knowing. Are you going to tell me that some bibliometrician is going to go up to a young person pregnant and ill with the new ecstasies of poetry, so taken and obsessed that he's trying to embody himself with it – that this kind of guy or woman is going to go up to that young person and comfort him with some gentle knowledge to salve his mind, even if just for a few moments? I doubt it. Literature is infinite. You can only quantize it as a learning gnome descending by metempsychosis to the arcane state of man. That can do it, nothing else. And then the world will be full of stories, blossoming like the stretched stomach of a pregnant woman and the browning of her aureoles. What happens when a man's writing a sentence (the god of manifest tautology, American Janus, says: it is freedom and incarceration)? So many activities are going on. Imagine what happens when you try to tell a story or write a poem. It gets infinite right there, a black hole sun. Surpassing trenchancy: A veritable bloody owl as Earnest wrote. Probably more than that. Like a walnut, that's what the poets write ... and the technical men think that we can live without them. Come. Cum. Said the muse, the supergirl. Let me in, said I. I'm just a poor beggar in search of God. I've read those Russian texts on pilgrimage. The supergirl is my Mecca, she is the path on the dried-earth ledge at the end of which stands the White Cross in the mountains northeast of Thessaloniki. She is

not ridden with anything. No man no woman can gull her. She is the supergirl (and supergirls don't cry). She's got the poet by his balls, those wiry testicles balloon for her, she sucks the cum off like a nymph, but she is no nymph she is just thorough. She has to clean the man somehow. She can't leave his crotch to dry and smell and she knows this. She's like a mother-dog after the cum, or a mother-cat. She has dirt to heal him with and the man is only allowed to finger her. The cunt of a woman cannot be prodigal because it is a female thing – only male stems are prodigal, sons returning to the father, and so on. That difference is the essence of her brim and grass, which unlike the phallus is unsurpassable, one can only pull back the grass and engage at the brim to peel out the labia and gaze at that tulip: It is thorough. Literature is infinite. If I morally descend when in the auto-transition from writing as a human being to writing as a male (who is a lustful creature) to a lecher who wants to pop the cherry and rend the hymen of every maiden on earth, then it is what it is. A wrinkle in the moral lobe, irreversible and bounded and constant as the speed of light is to reference systems. I cannot help it: I lust, therefore I literally am. Therefore are my children. Therefore are my grandchildren. Therefore art Thou. Therefore is the *carceral state*. It is logical. It's the warden's hymn and the governor's enervation, but it is the runner's stopwatch and body and chalked mark on the track floor which cannot be seen by the outside world – that watch and body and mark is the only source of words that the writer has, in the end that's all he's got. If his voice is silenced he always has more words. It's all a circle. Do I have anything to say at all? God's not dead but Gide is. A certain conception of God died with Gide though. It was my conception, a conception that can only come out of the digs of a diarist. But that conception is much too difficult to explain. I can see the price of it hanging in the air hinged to the seed-concept of unattainable foods, the price sent rocketing by commoditists and the lie of scarcity. So the conception has become a commodity to me which I cannot afford to gamble any of my money on. I have that much of a deconstruction and the price was high enough for that. Perhaps on a separate piece of paper I could tell all about it. But I can't do it here. If you can't get beyond your own truths, then you'll get caught by them and people will start to enjoy their own captivity and promote the captivity of others in traditional environments: prisons, and the whole system of them. In writing it can come off as an affectation. Don't pay attention to what writers say, they're unknowingly lending credence to the wardens and the governors and to the more intelligent guards (who know a thing or two, writers have depicted guards with an almost incomprehensible ignorance and conceit and arrogance, who of them has ever done a study of a guard's consciousness?). Writers think that they know wardens and governors (authorities of the state, authorities of legal and illegal corporate personas) better than others and better than the wardens and governors know them. Because they expose them, they vilify them. It is not true. The wardens and the governors know more about writers than we would think, truly much more than the writers would like to think – the genre is disturbingly moot, but not out of necessity. They know what the writers are up to. It is up to the writer to find out what they know and to expose them and vilify them *then and there* – in the end only that will allow the writer to truly get at these people. That is the truth. "Will you won't you want me to make you, I'm coming down fast but I'm miles above you." That is a caution to writers, deconstructionists,

hacks, fags, les's, bi's, transvestites, straights, whores, pimps, gigolos, agents, publishers, lawyers, grammarians, poets, critics, poeritics, everybody who means anything, to start getting it right. "Will you won't you want me to make you, I'm coming down fast but don't let me break you." That is a threat: Watch out, I can use the caveat as flint. "See you see, I am quite serious. I won't take any hostages and I'll use all of my fail-safe mechanisms. The warden will die." Here is something Orwell wrote about in his short story *Shooting an Elephant* which pertained to some of his routine sights as a police officer in Burma, where the largest prison in the British Empire had been built near Rangoon at Insein: "I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing and the sooner I chucked up my job and got out of it the better. Theoretically – and secretly of course – I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British. As for the job I was doing, I hated it more bitterly than I can perhaps make clear. In a job like that you see the dirty work of Empire at close quarters. The wretched prisoners huddling in the stinking cages of the lock-ups, the gray, cowed faces of the long-term convicts, the scarred buttocks of the men who had been bogged with bamboos – all these oppressed me with an intolerable sense of guilt." So I will not apologize. Rastafarianism is no different from this conscientious expulsion of the bowels that Orwell wrote out of himself. Orwell and Marley represent a distinct and marked continuum, like a gender mole shared by two brothers who can no longer stay at arms length from each other. Something has to change in the world. Or I'll boil over. America didn't give me the defective but solid tenets that England gave to Orwell. It doesn't have it go give. I accept that. But I accept the consequences also, and as England had to accept Orwell's consequences, America will have to accept mine also, in or out of court, whether or not the ATF blows Orwell's elbow off – ghettoed snipers littering Agamemnon's floor, ghettoed like Auden's Mind, I can imagine them securing me on the ground and then pushing half a dozen tranquilizer shots into my legs.

There are only two types of sincerity: sincerity, and the expression of fear. You can express gratitude or satisfaction or kindness, but there is no guarantee in any of these that the mood behind the expression will actually be there. These are, after all, expressions. The word 'fear' invokes the mood whether the emotion is there in the beginning or not. That's an essential difference and I know of no other word that does this. Language is very evident. Ours knows much too well how to invoke the whole set of our metaphysical agonies: It's a power game, another Indo-European prison. Pity is not a romantic notion, it is not a requirement that a writer express pity. If there is pity to be had for the people or characters he is writing about or the state of the world he is representing or suggesting through or independent of them, the reader will either detect it or not detect it. It's like an electrical current. It would have to be. No writer should try to represent pity, the more so as his awareness of it increases. For some cross female or male to say that it is a lack of pity in Maugham's novels and short stories and plays that segregates him from our weird pantheon of great writers, then we must segregate Tolstoy as well. We must declare Faulkner a sadist and then segregate him in classic American style: Lock-up, discard the key. Aldous Huxley knew we would end up with such concentration camps as these. Language is only

as evident as is the vacuum of maliciousness in our talking. Our language is only useful for saving and preserving lives. Else, it destroys. Any neutral ground must be declared, not found, as one finds the solidity of a rock, or the planar surface of a coffee cup, or the wavelength frequencies of the songs that birds sing or just chirp depending on which bird is vocalizing. You can be indifferent to these things, but not neutral. If you're neutral, you've got an attitude; one which has not chosen to take the side of saving and preserving lives, or sustaining indifference. It's the same thing in war. War always comes before prison in our special cultures, before incarceration. That's another thing. If we can get anything out of our language at all, we can get to our seed-concepts. Look at me. Look what I have to do. What would we do if the deconstructionists of the 20th century and the journalistic masters of story telling of the same century hadn't done some work? I would be completely lost. I'd have to invent it myself and so suffer self-doubt and grab at any of our metaphysical agonies every time I got desperate but still had to write. Poets have a job to do: They can't declare peace, but they can and do make it clear that it's the only respectable option (this is a lie, they do no such thing, they've gotten lazy and fat on the cultural equivalents of fruit-filled chocolates: I was not being truthful, I sank into the swamp of ambition; I let it go now, and forever more). Every time they synthesize sincerity with poetic stuff they make it clear (an extension of the lie).

I will create an endless catalogue of journal entries:

1. That intellectual expectations are never helpful, and qualitatively trite. That expectation is due where we have to make a tool that cuts a certain kind of object *a* at a certain angle *b* for a certain purpose *c*. I'll notice Veblen here, the poor wretch.

2. That vibration frequencies sum to a heterological survival state in the body of an organism. That the standard model of Chomskian linguistics would either need to co-opt it, or totally resist its grip on recursion in animals, and thus die.

3. That language can cut this way *if you try very hard*.

4. That before a poem gets written one should use one's body and mind and speech and writing and cunning and intelligence to end the genocide in the Congo and save the mountain gorillas left in Uganda, Nigeria, Rwanda, and the Congo from extinction.

5. What books do I have on my desk made in Spain? *The Grass Harp*, *Inside the Whale and Other Essays*, *Light in August*, *20th Century Russian Drama*, *The Cancer Ward*, and the July 2008 edition of *National Geographic*. In these four books and one magazine I can access the whole of human existence, I can access existence itself, denuded as it is, as it could not *not* be, as certain as death: Coeval with it and bounded by a different order of things than that of creation – but with an umbilical.

6. "Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty I, Interim Agreement: Bilateral agreement between the US and USSR of five-year duration which froze the number of strategic ballistic missiles at 1972 levels. Construction of additional land-based ICBM silos were prohibited, while SLBM launcher levels can be increased if corresponding reductions are made in older ICBM or SLBM launchers. Modernization of launchers is allowed, however, if kept within specific dimensions." *The incredible caveats written there. Marking the continuum of the nuclear – aerospace – weapons triumvirate.*

*Attribution to rat haus reality, ratical branch: <http://www.ratical.org/>. SALT II never ratified because of the Soviet Union's entrance into Afghanistan. My entry. I can access existence itself in a stack of books, denuded as it is, as it could not but be, as certain as death: Coeval with it, needing no more than a basic umbilical. Post-911 civilian targets and civilian targeting in Afghanistan early in the war the arch strategy of the American war machine. Convoys as displacements from that targeting getting targeted on the escape roads; at least one wedding, hundreds of bombings of rows of mud houses. Targeting social grids, the American prison. I will write the citations later. Tell me, why does not Unesco mark as world heritage sites the known sites of death-causing depleted uranium soil and water deposits and object coatings and DU microparticles embedded as grime and sludge in the unique dust of the Arabian sands? This is a serious question. It is not a serious question from me. It is one of our serious questions, of those that are of all time serious. One should think about it, all of the reasons it is so, and then do something about it. There are three places I know of that I can direct people to. One is in a Serbian village where people don't live anymore (they died-off soon after the Nato raids: Gorovich, bad man!), the other is in Iraq at a bazaar where young lanky teenage boys mingle and grin and the ground radiates from the soil-deposits as it would from the soil at the gates of Chernobyl's sarcophagus; the other is in Saudi Arabia at a port on the Persian Gulf not that far from the Kuwaiti border (Al Jubail, Camp 13 isn't there any more). I was there, I knew the sand in the air in the morning – it blew around – and the blue gulf and the horrible choking burn-off of the ammoniac gasses at night leaking like bladed white lines into the unique desert air that is ubiquitous whenever it is morning in Arabia, it traffics the nostrils invigoratingly because one knows one is surviving in hell and not being killed off by it, it is such an anti-ennervation to be there as a potentially doomed but brutally patient man. There are reasons Mecca is in that land, there is reasoning in the existence of Mecca. So then, where are the books about these great holocaust sites? Who's doing the history? Who's talking to the scientists? Where are the field workers and the statisticians? Where are the bleating NGOs in this particular game? They're working in the wars of preference. Look at how they hedge their budgets with relation to the potential bid value of the war (this is disturbingly many-faceted). They're siphoning off the little electricity made available by the US's erudite reconstruction of the electricity grids in Kabul. Cash for product. (National Geographic's mountain gorilla pieces are killing machines.) Yes, it is true. Failure in execution is the essence of art. How, in other words, can I ever render life, in the way that life is? There is a way that life *is*. No one can discredit an existential. 'I told you not to wander out in the dark. I told you 'bout the swans, that they live in the park.' What's my Army Boy doing, my beloved Marine? Are they out of prison yet? "It is all the American prison. We all who were born in America go to war for her. Then she puts us away for a lifetime: a pension, a wheelchair, a mansion or a house in the remaining suburbs, or a ghetto, or worse, or illness and psychic wreckage. Or she takes us all the way to our carceral stage. Then she buries us, then she swallows us. Then it ends. We come to an end. That's her border. That's all she knows. The rest is up to us, or up to God, we don't know. We do not know what we pledged, what we might have pledged, and what it's going to do at the border, or after it." America's pitted against an 'it' that she never gets to know about. It's going to hurt. Depleted uranium is a waste product, a degraded isotope (U238) dumped*

out into existence during the separation process from a more lethal and energetic isotope (U235), the latter used for energy-intensive purposes like power plants and nuclear weapons (in combination with other uranium isotopes). It's a matter of the calculated instances after that. One ton of depleted uranium eq. 2,000 pounds of the same. Given a dispersion rate of 300 tons over a given interval (the duration of our average war, say, or the average duration of a bombing period in a strategic offensive, taking our aggression in Iraq as an example of such a sum (300 tons)), we arrive at roughly 600,000 pounds of depleted uranium radial with our earth and impounded like ticketed and stolen cars in it. At reported estimates of America's storage of it as a waste product (it is stored in barrels in underground locations across the country, and guarded across the country at lucrative rates for private contractors, some of whom were also contracted to build the reactors that did the separation and enrichment activities in the first place) it would take another 1666.67 such instances in wars or massacres or waste-disposal-denudement-of-nature-and-people contracts and associated hegemonic policies to remove the waste from American soil completely. That's fucking evil. That is very fucking evil. Now imagine it for real. This time 'it' is us. Again. As it always was. As it has since we started. It's going to hurt someone. It's gonta to do some ruinin'. The least bit of *me personally* isn't gonta like it. What am I gonta do?

I repent much. I can't retract it from its entrance into the world, but I repent it. It was already in the world, I only voiced it as others have done already and needed the same succors of it that I have needed. Therefore, I pray for its evidence. Theological dogmas would misunderstand me. I have voiced with as much love that there is when love presumably counteracts evil when Paul starts speaking of it in *Corinthians*. I have that much love in me to do that. I swear. I swear on the Cross that it is like this.

What's parted so far in this land? What has broken the joints and is the creature still walking? The creature is no longer walking. As a lawyer cannot depart from facts in the ideal nature of that agreement between human beings and reality which is what we call law, so I cannot depart in that way here. The truth is not that America is dying, nor is she just surviving, nor is she latent with the American promise. The truth is that America died with the industrial revolution. That sounds to be a very simplistic and crassly dualistic statement. But it is a fact. It is a simple and incontrovertible fact. America's been dead for at least 170 years. Prison is structural, friend. Ever since the beginning of the colonial eras, explanation has been driven by historical enforcement. Again, prison is structural, friend. It thrives and expands once the real jaundice has set in. I personally watch it, daily, I have observed it, I have lived it. I have seen the statistics on drug crime, murder, real and per capita incarceration rates, both of which in America are greater than any other nation on earth. I have been thrown by the statistics. It has hurt and I have had to hold my head in my hands. I've had to hold my tongue. I'm not holding it any more. "Atticus, help me. I just need a short lease, to complete the book. I am not less than it, Atticus. It is not less than me, old friend, I tell you in truth that I have never seen anything like it. Give up your slaves, Atty. I am here in the 21st century AD, you see. That means "after death." Do not have my books bound without a living and exploratory wage to the binders, else do not publish me at all. For I am "after death." It can't hurt

more than that. There can be no more salve, for they have given me a soul. It is not a false thing, Atty, but it is burdensome, the salves are different today, we've had wars that would make Caesar ruddy in the face. The Rubicon is different also. I mustn't tell you about that. Sleep well, Atty."

Today is my birthday, I wrote to Atty last night. November 22, 1968—November 22, 2008. When you're forty, it snows. And alas, we had our first snow today this very overnight. The morning is rocked with snow, I told you the swans, that they live in the park. I told you not to wander out in the dark. You must be darkness itself to walk in the dark, you must be to the dark a darkness yourself so that it trembles as you approach it. As you pass through it it must fall away as dead darkness from you. So that you are the only one left, bare and tree-like. This is AD, "after death." Let us renounce the dichotomies of the bitched mandarins. Unction and Charisma and the irrigation-lets watering the dry ditches in the hills' guts. In the mountains north of Thessaloniki, you can read the Philokalia, and say the Jesus prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me." When you leave, you end up returning to the sanguine lands of the world war. My birthday has been portentous. Gide has the same obsession as I had (he has told me so), and still holds onto as an old skein that the two of us had hoped to throw out. It is the day that Kennedy was taken out, more properly a bullet was put through his head, another through his neck, by snipers. His wife held her dead husband's bleeding head, what terror, the personal, American terror in her gut she must have been feeling. In 1968 it was King and another Kennedy. None of the three had allowed me to be born before they were killed. I just ended up, like so many others born that day in 1968, stuck with a date in a year, and a year in a century. When you're forty with that, it does snow. What else could it do? The answer is nothing. When your forty with that, it snows. This is after the death of death. When with this you're forty, your thirties are gone and deadened-out, or killed-off. Death is left alone these days. We've got no analog for it.

Depleted uranium is dispersed over calculated intervals and with quotients of its total existence organized by the Pentagon. We are implementing premeditated instances of population disposal. Waste disposal that factors-out as mass murder. Mass murder that factors-out as waste disposal. These are designed to protect the hegemony on all sides and from all sides. So I have perhaps submitted to the world a strategy of archiving personal experience and personal existence. So much for that strangeness. Stalks of watergrass peel out at the breezes. The breathing and dying afflatus, which probably never died, and probably never lived; because things are much too complex. Lukacs, Ibsen, Styron. I do not need long lists. Semprum. I am fine. Mailer. Capote. Bad-mouthing each other like brothers. So you see. It is nothing. In the end we are left with 500,000 dead children in less than a decade *over a decade* (they must have desired to set a record) of UN sanctions on Iraq throughout the 1990s. The statistic was an embryo; it grew new sets of statistics in the following decade. Everywhere. The prose is breaking down now. Fine. I should sleep. There is a day tomorrow, and there are many personal challenges. I have archived almost none of them, and I know why. Lukacs wrote all about it, but I'm no Lenin. But Marxism and Christianity

are no foes. What of it? What *of it*? Fuck. Seriously fuck. What's obvious. Reform crime and punishment all across the spectrum. Get real.

I must get a biography of Janis Karpinski, if such a thing exists yet. Personally I would love to write it myself, as well as one on McCain. It would appear that there are very different motivations for the two different things when judged on the weirdly deft surfaces of time, but in reality the motivations I have for both are very similar and also judged on the weirdly deft surfaces of time. But I as well, as all, must pursue my goals in the framework of the tautologies of time (where I am limited, and where as yet nothing new about it has appeared in the history of life that I know of, unless secrets are being kept from me). But I must *also pursue* the tautologies of time *themselves*, and therefore I can't leave the *possibility* of these two biographies and their desired and factual associations in time go unmentioned. For there is some good history to be had there. At the age of 72, I calculate that McCain was born in 1935. I wonder where he was when we were fighting the Korean war (on whose behalf, I may not find consensus), aside from whatever schooling he may have been doing and being of service age at some point. If what exactly happened to him in Vietnam is still an open book (which to my understanding it is), then I wonder about the first proposition considering many things, including the fact of his father Admiral McCain and naturally many things. Call this sketch an outline of desire. Like any inadequate poem or story. And remember that reminders are never enough, my skin is plagued and shingled from that failure, I have had to move out of Laos into Cambodia, where none of you know that I reported only parts of my interceptions to Command HQ. That HQ sent an airborne Commando unit into the night to locate me and bind me in my hole so that I would never leave. I couldn't return ruined and defused and umbilical to my mother, I would have talked. Gabriel speaks, I died a long time ago in the rice fields there, the overflights ignored my serial number that I hacked out in the rice paddies; they ignored the serial numbers of others that I came to know before they died. We were a small community for a while with lots of contingency plans, so we slept miles apart from each other and invented methods of communicating. I don't know what happened to them after that. But if you want the knowledge of a certain kind of hindsight from a dead one like me, I'll tell you. I know how America sees its boys in uniform when in war. They don't see them as hardened men (men with plenty of hair on their bodies and a history of sperm dissemination in many women and worn images in their faces, that's what they've got in their unconscious about the whole fucking thing of being hardened). They see them as Olympians. Americans denude them by that. They believe that the older men, let's say thirty-up, with the images of worn and tested faces remolded many times by the harshness of circumstance, and a history of prostitutes and bearing more body hair, are less deserving of being Olympian. Only the older ones benefit in the transaction ironically enough—cash for product. We all pay for America, we all serve her in her wars, some of us pray for America, many of us pledge to her flag. A syndrome—be it the Gulf War syndrome, the Stockholm syndrome, whatever—is too weak to uphold this weight in a court of law. We're going to have to sweat out and cum-off our iconologies because Kennedy grew his spring oats and started ballooning his dangerous testicles in the yellow wake of the summer of 1950 (the Rosenbergs,

the other high profile red-naps of that year). Poor De Gaulle, Satroc. The penitentiary grounds ail with calls to us to throw away our watches and lance our wounds for records of injustice. Gabriel came down because something with a voice had to tell of the death on these grounds (for God has pursued death as he has pursued life). That America has chosen death. America is Death. Behold the dirt. Find succor in carrots and the basal plates of bulbs. Let no man tear your hands from this, lest thou wilt die: Build a prison on a place, the ground under it dies. I swear on the Cross. U238 hits the object and goes airborne-falling-to-the-ground at some place, the ground dies. Eq. the land on which prisons are built AND land contaminated by U238. Eq. Def. They are interchangeable: DEFCON predicates in a Defcon predicate function. Take this home with you warden. Take this home with you Petreus you deluded fuck-baby. These aren't word-prisons they're real. O we will have to extrapolate the truth in our legal system from the tectonics of the era-and-eon-plagued plates, but we'll get there, and we'll stuff you. We'll bring down the Centcom Heist. We'll deconstruct the Stockholm robbery and weight the whole with whatever is necessary—balm, food, cloth, garb, logic, citations.

Here are the steps that Einstein used to eke out the theory of relativity. Step 1. Find out where our theories have consequences. Step 2. Find out where those consequences result in contradiction. Step 3. Check the contradictions to determine whether one can still work with them under conditions of relativity. Step 4. Demand invariance as a natural law. Step 5. Find the tools and transformation methods that will produce the invariances under experimental conditions. That's deconstruction. That is how you get to proof positive under difficult or near-to-impossible circumstances. That's what we're doing with the American prison. That's what we'll do with Centcom. We'll Defcon Centcom. We'll change literature. We'll change the world. We'll let minds live again. The Spirit will breathe. We'll free bodies. We'll give back the hearts that we took away. We'll turn the Stockholm robbery into another of Freud's luminal rockets against the haloed ones. We have to write this whole conundrum out for the love of the autistics, who seem to cavort in ways that suggest that they are willing to wait for us. They are wrong to do so.

"I understand the causes all too well, judge. Therefore I understand your reasons. Your are plagued by them. Because you can never own or understand causation; as a result the effect will also elude you. You've got to build prisons, invent event horizons, and formulate legal codes and statutes to deal with that fact; it is understandable that you must have many people pay for it by precedent. But did you know that this makes you out to look like a recidivist offender? You build up a whole archipelago of reasons—it's your framework; it's *our* crime and punishment grid. Technically speaking, the whole thing can be reversed in the other direction; it is symmetric.

We have a record on the only man that Richard Cheney ever shot; well, to our knowledge the only one. It was Harry Whittington. Shot in February 2006. Before that Harry served on the Texas Board of Corrections and on the bonding authority that builds prisons. Harry said of prisons that they "are to

crime what greenhouses are to plants." Molly Ivins wrote on February 13 of that year that Harry believed that "the severity of sentences has no effect on crime." He said, or recommended, that most of the people in prison belong in psychiatric centers. The actions of the agent of this shooting of Whittington, who, according to Molly was "seriously civilized, particularly on the issues of crime, punishment and prisons" were not spun, they were manifestly reformed, thrown into a moribund and amoral orbit by the agent's, that is to Cheney's, "advisor": "He was not careless or incautious (and did not) violate of any of the (rules). He didn't do anything he wasn't supposed to do." Of course those words are beyond reproach, they simply say that the patient, Mr. Cheney, is a reformed man, has had his body-hair removed, has returned to the cradle. This is getting hackneyed, but the following is perversely relevant; Molly wrote that Harry was wont to point out that "the only thing prisons are good for is segregating violent people from the rest of society." But I was not wholly aware that Texas keeps non-violent incarcerants and the mentally retarded locked-up. To summarize, Whittington is the man who Richard Cheney shot in the chest in a hunting accident. Scooter Libby knew about the dead ground. The charges in his indictment left him only dead ground. He must have understood something about the prison-State, and the prison-state. He must have understood that he was in the carceral stage of his life. He has famous words: "They turn in clusters, because their roots connect them." He understood the treachery of the archipelago and the grids all too well. He was turned out to the basal plates in the dirt to suffer the meager fare of the constant gardener. I suspect he understands his good fortune by now.

They took Tookie Williams out in late 2005. His lawyers put him in a trap. He was trapped on all sides. He wasn't the animal. For me, it snowed on my 40th birthday. In the year of the Iguana. It touched me as every year does. It snowed and I had made it through my thirties with the help of God, else I don't know what. I truly do not. The coma took me away from people for two weeks. Eq. to a dozen lethal mushrooms. No brain damage. The induced vomiting that my son and wife induced me to saved me. And the toxicologist the hospital brought in from another city, who told my wife that there had never been in his been a case so severe in his country, irrespective of whether survival prevailed or did not.

I will gather statistics on capital punishment from each state from each year. From papers in the gov's office to words gone airborne on the subject and on the individual cases of death row inmates themselves, and their records in that office; in his limousines, in the back-rooms and corridors of power where the gobs and their friends caucus for the slow civil death of sectors of the population. They all hope together in reported séances (I have heard about them, I'm not going to source it, it's not my problem at this point, never was) that the other sectors of society will find it to be a pleasant intoxicant; like a football game watched with friends at the home a friend, with chips, crackers, and beer, and wives. Plenty of subliminals to trigger the mental tics (messed thought-blocs) in known quantities of people, plenty of Mussolini for Skinner and Chomsky holding hands with Sowell in the Quad, spare me my rights to be excused for this please, don't insult my intelligence. I will validate all reports possible with regards to the words, documents, and verbal reports of and on

the men and women who were governing those states at those times. I will bring in specialists in modality in the English and other languages to neutralize any foolish or stupid legal interpretations of things said or legal concepts and precedents proposed, suggested, put-forward, exhibited, or judged; for declaratives, conditionals, interrogatives, and so forth; conditionals especially; I will even add my knowledge in that field to the core of it if I can. I'll ask these linguists, grammarians and philosophers to factor in time and aspect as much as is possible, even separately if necessary. I will investigate their history prior to their governorships. The routes into the histories of Bush the Texas gov and Schwarzenhager the California gov may be the most accessible. This is so not just because of the documented facts of their warped personalities but the death and carrion that they left in their paths in life and in the paths to power. And due to the number of executions, stays, stays denied, and other variants during their governorships (a set of comparative statistics, obviously). A governorship is a terrible thing to give. An education is a terrible thing to waste. The possibilities encumbered in that stupid conundrum are finite but huge. Imagine. Just think of the romance in it, the love, the unencumbered affairs of the heart to be released; the agile and thorough and unangered time and money and people for the education of tens, of hundreds of thousands of young minds in America. Like the stories stored away in the story teller's mind. Let the dead bury their dead. For some of us they're still alive. That's a hazardous norm to the State that has to be wrestled with or killed. "Prison" gets used as a crafty metaphor for anyone uncured or not having passed through the chosen rituals of passage. Then "war," the same. Stem-child to war, prison awaits crimes against war, each war; it is receptacle and the ampoule for those crimes, for those minds and bodies and names and actions and moods and opinions and histories of the violators against war. Make wars against crimes against wars. That would be a new kind of war crime; made in the USA. War on teen pregnancy (teen pregnancy is the enemy of the war on teen pregnancy, so we have to war on it; if we war on it, it must be our enemy), war on crime (crime is the enemy of war on crime, so we have to war on it; if we war on it, it must be our enemy), war on drugs (drugs are the enemy of the war on drugs, so we have to war on them; if we war on it, it must be our enemy), war on terror (terror is the enemy of the war on terror, so we have to war on it; if we war on it, it must be our enemy; Ibsen would love me for this), each maintained with its own collection of statutes and precedents growing and spreading like weeds; and at the end of the line comes the punishment for crimes against war—that construction that we call prison, that thing webbed-in with our thoughts and words. It's a human body locked up, essentially. I'm tempted to a rather competent play on words—death row being what it is, there can be the death of that row. There's no difference between that and a body that's been locked up. It's natural law. There must be frequent occasions of vitamin B on the body for life to go on, but the death of those vitamins may or may not in the end depend on the fossil deposits of bodies. That throws death row in doubt. It's death may be an immediate refraction or a more disciplined and cautious reflection of the mysterious and undivided light of truth. War is over. December 3, 2008. That's an awful lot of deconstruction today. December 3, 2008.

Living with History.

I have a parallel eye. I've got the thousand yard stare. (When Dana walked in I lost my breath. I don't know why.) Literature is infinite. "To live in history is to cease to be a protestant." Very well. To live outside history is to be corporate. Very well. Happy X-Mass. From the Americans. We're not all that bad. Some of us like each other. Some of us don't like each other. I haven't got any more stories to tell.

Monkeys in history.

Eye ripped away at Nard and gave him a second asshole. Nard liked it better with just one. He complained to Eye about it. Eye was uninterested and threatened to give him a third one. Nard walked away quickly, cowering. Eye beat his chest and grunted.

How to premeditate a document? Not to scorn it beforehand. To love it. Puffs of smoke rising out of the side of the earth. Fires on the embankments. Three or four instances, rather quiet. It looked like they had some intention to canvass-out.

Crime and punishment.

Crime and punishment constitute the continuum of life. Each person is marked by this in a way that is absolutely analogous to marking in language (for example gender marking in English versus Latin). Every analysis is probably done in these terms, as every analysis probably has always gravitated to these terms naturally. So I have to ask you, what *is* a writer? What is that term all about? Because conventional, nuclear, biological, germ and laser weaponry are borne-out of that continuum; and for me my question would be meaningless without it.

The monkey-chain.

"Dear God please. . . keep my neurosis within certain necessary limits. . . . Okay. . . . Amen." We're going to have to look closely at the Freudian picture of childhood. To go nuclear, to go ontogenesis. Probing childhood, it's that vastly infinite and necessary. I had not known for so long. It took too long. It shouldn't have happened. I've got to go nuclear now, at this point, I have no choice but to do this. I have to do it. Hell on it. Thanks to George W. Bush we can think of the American prison as a moral conception. What a salve. I may have to draw remittances. Stale floor meeds. Shame on Gov. Schwarzenegger. Shame on the United States Supreme Court. Shame on the California Supreme Court. Shame on the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. Shame on us. Big time. His lawyers referred to Tookie's "redemption" as the final appeal for his life. It must have been obvious to them, they were not stupid men: America's idea of "redemption" is built on the fundamentalist ideation of punishment that it (punishment) cannot ever, ever possibly be obviated for whatever reason (because there are none). When it was obvious to all that he would not "apologize for his crimes" (because he never pleaded guilty to any of them) and that he would not "lie to save his life" (with the statement that he "wanted to live" coupled with it), an appeal to his "redemption" to justify a commutation to life was the way his lawyers

killed him. Americans predicate redemption on subjugation, and he would not be subjugated, for he could not ask for a redemption predicated on the crimes he was accused of committing. His lawyers knew this. His case for what he continued to claim was his innocence was actually very, very strong. Just look at the record. Christ, it's unbelievable. The only place I saw it seriously mentioned was in a posting on an internet petition for a stay of his execution to the wretched Terminator, by the co-author of some of his books, a lady, unsurprisingly. You may look it up yourself. I know they attempted it in the courts. Chalk that up with the fact that you're dealing with a Governor who said at one time that he had an "inner Nazi," built his financial Empire (without regret, apparently) on playing a Terminator who blew people away with the most withering and visceral violence, what were they thinking? I pause. Now I think. Good old Scooter Libby: "They turn in clusters, because their roots connect them." Poor old Harry Whittington. You see, by that time the USG had already begun to spy on Quakers. It just all fits together like a monkey-chain. I don't like it any more than you do.

I have to pull back and stand forward simultaneously. It is retrenchment for what retrenchment has always been and for what it has always served, which cannot be named, but is. Now that we can think of prison as a moral conception we do not have to wreck anyone with rules or formulations on something or other made up to protect the gate-keepers from their self-engendered memories (that's when history gets written). This can cut in a million different directions though. One must be cautious but forthwith. It is where ardor cums-off with a woman whether it is supported by the frame of a bed or not. It's death to the monkey-chain. War is over. If you want it. (It's a fucking subjunctive tautology for Christ's sake. Fuck it all else. Live with it. Sit on your ass and complain about history and do fucking nothing and be fucking complicit. Dig your own grave, 'cause you're gonna have to bury your own dead. Write your fucking novel.) Just as you wish. If you people wish to put yourselves outside of the Judeo-Christian history completely, go ahead. Just as you wish. Although I do not understand you, it is explainable. You would not have been able to colonize if you had not squashed it. But don't be surprised that you find yourself burning. There's nothing clerical about this. It's *kibosh*, which is Gaelic. *Karma*. Just as you wish.

Guerrillas.

Are there too many guerrillas in the stretch of possible expressions to reach a meaningful human theorem? In fact, the stretch is a bunch of parental guerrillas chains. This is what happens: Man becomes a plagued theorem. War isn't over. We don't want it. Well.

Theaters One.

'You are gay?'

'Yes, for 30 million years now.'

'Ah, it is the angels, and the amber.'

'Yes. It is.'

'Do you walk the night alone?'

'I have never needed to. It has not always been like this, like it is today, you understand?'

'You mean the pain of war.'

'Yes. That is what I mean.'

'Can it be brought back?'

'It actually never left. We just changed.'

'I don't know what to say.'

'There is no reason to say anything. We have already tried that.'

'It never leaves you, does it?'

'Never.'

Someone turns a table.

'Why did you do turn that table?'

'I don't know. 3.141592653.'

Theatres 2.

Shot-guy: Mr. Cheney shot me last week; he pulled away my fingernails first. This week he talked up some dudes so that he could deny me my rights. Yesterday he named me an enemy combatant. Today he let me die in Darfur. There was this guy named Bush watching on all the time. Seemed to be nodding. So I said to the mojo-fuck: 'We are all gay; we are all indigenous.'

Shot-guy's interlocutor: 'You have to forgive man his ignorance and avarice.'

Shot-guy: 'Fuck-all I do.'

Shot-guy's interlocutor: 'Fuck-all you do.'

Shot-guy's interlocutor: 'In ghetto uprisings, the blame must always be cast on government. That is one of our social truisms, and has been repeated throughout history.'

Shot-guy: 'Fuck-all.'

Shot-guy: 'Don't screw with my shit.'

I do not know what will happen to my work on this earth. I do know that God owns the registrar. I am content with that. There is nothing wrong with paying the ultimate price for one's work. We're just doing what other men and women do. It's the common ampoule for the living when they die and when they're living. Reinvention is our raw deal. There's nothing new under the sun. I'm ramping-up a vocabulary, you see, my own wretched domain.

Alone in the leftovers of Christianity. I am alone in the leftovers of Christianity. It was the Soviet Union that finally demonstrated that to the world. It was our like-minded reactions that re-enforced the demonstration. Solzhenitsyn said that the prevailing commercialist reflexes thereafter imposed by America and others required "ideological defenses against the west." His declaration that the Russian Orthodox Church could save the world was unfortunately (for him, I am sad to say) a genre that was too desperate to ever take hold. Camus was easier than that. So the people in the ménage of the Soviets submitted the last, and ultimate, pay-out, the largest pay-out in the history of Christendom. They took care of this for us. Go to the *Cancer Ward*. Historians will not speak of that broken continuum. They will do what they can to keep it off-limits to the Holocaust, and narrate the latter as a castle to be protected by crenellation. I can understand

that. But it is not a truth. The poets have been pre-occupied with survival; they have reflected many prisons and sometimes persons, outside their heads and inside. Things have been in quite a haste. I'm a kind of a leftover, unless I can draw it into the dray fields of the penal codes, which are littered with mines, like blood littered on Agamemnon's floor. Like Auden's rude and ruddy mind, as impolitely sanguine as Caesar's blood-letting after the Rubicon.

It is a raw miracle that prisoners never become revanchist hawks. But the logic of it is unbeatable. Books and time, time and books, the mess, the guards, spoon-knives, a routine, rules. It's my day at work, but without the books. A book unpresent is a book that is just a man on his bunk, a quiet wall and the tasteful succor of a cigarette: a prisoner could never go corporate or bare the ethnic claw. He might somehow, through an improbable gathering of circumstances, get caught up in one of those two or both, but he could never believe in either of them. Prisoners are the anti-theses of every kind of legitimist. A prisoner learns to control his mayhem because it is the endemic nature of a prisoner (his private nature, not ours: we aren't going to discard our lanyards just to keep Euclid pimping) to dwell on death, which Plato extolled an alloy-meditation (and his Christian scions admonished us with as a needful remembrance lest we forget the coming of our passage). Their daily involvement in it is a threat to the war machine that gave them their second Christening, a jail sentence. I swear on the Cross this is true. Meanwhile I and my other free comrades are told to spill Agamemnon's guts. After we take care of it we throw away our watches and watch them spin into an orbit that the State is not able to control. If they see us do it, they lock us up too. Human beings have a lot of anterooms, that is nothing more than an abundant given. Given that, we've got grist for the mill. Let Auden and his follower's die off quickly, please. There's no such thing as "the sensuous man-in-the-street" (not even counting the disingenuity of a hyphenated man, and his ability to think it of another, and perhaps even himself) or "the romantic lie" 'folded' in his "brain" (Hemingway would have mocked this as the crockery of an old woman; and he would have been right about it). That's hackney, a pure plague on us. Unfair and pretentious, an award-template for his scion, a maraud bearing literature to its death. It must be the mill, the grist, again, a-fucking-gain. It's the war machine. It's Mother Teresa sucking-off Baby Doc, it's (with reference to a certain C.H.) the theory versus the practice and worse, the Stockholm Cult, the whole damn complex, the cum and the blood on the taxi seats littered by congressmen and the corporate centurions. Cosial tarctonc, denude! Fathom! EVENT! Phalampomx! Plague Them! Fool Them! Tell Them They Lie And Consume Like Fuckers And Bastards, Unworthy Of Esteem! Teach Them The Meaning Of Esteem! Dictionaries Please! Auden, Fuck Us, Wise Man, Reverend Of Our Scion! MasterMind Of DocTrops FuckUp With Mary Magdalena!

Call To Order: Auden Is A ComdomiteBastard! FeckHim! FragHim!

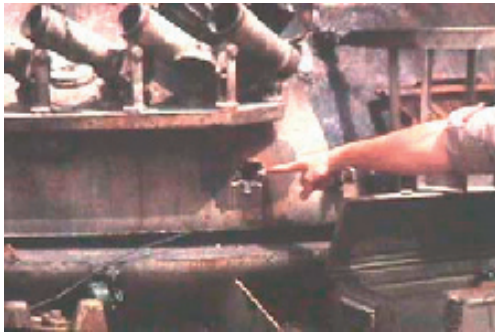
Call To Order: MotherTeresa Is A DiaphragmaticBitch! FuckHer! FragHer!

Call To Order: MassFuck! Will! Speak! MassFuck! Will! Make-A-Fuss! Make-A-Fuss! Will! MassFuck!

Well, then. An Iraqi T-72 hit by a Sabot, a rod of depleted uranium. Quantal grades of pressure moving all the way to a near-vacuum, annihilating live bodies inside, the uranium ignited by the friction of the penetration sending radioactive dust into the earth's crust and dome. A regular vortex sculpted by Gaudier and endorsed by Pound.

This punctured grave was moved to the Port at Al Jubail, which connected me to my work over a decade later, which connected to the Tapline Road, which eventually turned into The Choke Point. Every day, 360 miles, passing the dead-Indian camp at Ras Tanurah, filling up our beasts with unleaded. Just a note: My male ego was getting devastated and denuded; a repatriation—well, came prison. Sabots are sexy mother-fuckers, rod-to-hottoddy in the desert squall, there's a precious anti-enervation of acids and dust in the air in the morning in Jubail, where Camp 13 does not exist anymore. It is the ultimate, beating the often-foretold doom by simply surviving. I am happy I never had to go North to Hell at The Choke Point; though at least I would have had the theory of armed cover in my mind. At least that. Not the SERE program at least that. Not the upgrading of the SERE program, anything but that; combat by recon, shuttling convoys, whatever, anything else is fine with me. Anything.

Dear Society: I don't want to be your backdoor man. I don't want to be the one who has to tell you that CNN has the hold of a Comintern on America. I don't want to be the one who has to tell you that everyone from the Queen of England to the hounds of hell know about this. So your cell differs, I'll tell you. Like my cell differed when it became a carcinogen the moment I tugged on a joint laced with LSD, and cracked.



I'll leave you when the summer comes along, after undersecretary Wolfowitz and secretaries Ashcroft and Rumsfeld beg to be netted and riven by Scooter Libby's annals of love. I want to see them beg the court for execution before I leave you. I want to see Ashcroft and CNN apologize to Lindh before I leave you. I want to see Lindh free before I leave you. I want to see CNN and the BBC studied

by a thousand lawyers before I leave you. I want to see the end of serialized information cycles before I leave you. I want to see the breakdown of our weapons of choice before I leave you. I want it to be made clear that I have no reason to trust anyone who has not lived through the tangible aspects of life before spreading their germs, before I leave you. I want everyone who advocates anything to come out and say that they are theoreticians and have never understood angels before I leave you. Although I do pine for Kazin and Hemingway; but they were not advocates.

Somewhere on Mars. Two people.

A. A level nothing.

B. No.

A. Yes.

B. I'll need a tailored suit for a level nothing.

A. I don't see why.

B. The wheel's it.

A. Aha. So sudden as that.

B. Just so sudden.

A. It's technical. . . .

B. The tailor's dead. He's *dead*. I didn't want to tell you.

A. Ah. (*Disheartened*) But there are others.

B. No there aren't. There aren't any others. We'll take care of it though.

A. Right. Okay.

A. Do you hear?

Voice-1: (*Directly*) There's a slippage in the darker manifold. Folds you up and tans you for the next life.

A: Did you hear that?

Voice-2: It's the 'Shades.'

B: I heard it.

Voice-1: (*Aggressively*) Fuck-all it's the 'shades.'

A: What's he saying?

B: Wait. . . .

Voice-2: (*The same in return*) Fuck your dear heart on that.

A: He said 'fuck your dear heart.'

B: Listen. . . .

Voice-1: (*As if the deed had already been done, looking away*) Fuck your dear heart.

The voices stop.

There is a slippage in the darker manifold. Plain and easy. Like in Nevada. Where my torments aren't given names, half-dream, a low feed of mild hallucinogens sieved next to the cactuses; unhunted there; I can love without naming, oooo baby baby I love my torments, there are many like them, but these are mine ('daaaance the night away'). O forgive me my crassness, it is my weakness, my longest image, I am afraid it scares the inhabitants, o yes, the Crimea, the Bay Area, yesssss, Malta was insipid though. Time to lynch me for all of that, all of that level nothing and level everything, time to finally lynch me for it; I haven't paid-out in full. . . time to go, I know, I know, 'hello, hello, with the light's out. . . entertain us.' Dad's elephant was killed by Mama in '73, haven't you ever known that, o come, surely, well now that's okay if you don't, we sacrifice for our thrills. In Copenhagen, I told you not to walk out in the dark, and I told you that the swans, that they live in the posh part of the district in the fifth estuary. I told you that the northern European wind blows there and that it is strange. I told you that there were dead Iraqi bodies floating in the ice with the geese. I told you they would get hemmed in by it. I told you. I told you. I told you about these things. I told you about his informers. I told you that they stalk. I told you that it

wasn't worth it. I told you you'd die there. I told you that was where they would take you out. I even told you about the hit. I'm going to let you die off now with the words. . . wor-o-a-r.d.ts.s

A dream of people passing through a loop. Coming out of it with happy smiles on their faces and saying, "I am historical." Each one of them knew that at that moment, that that was what had happened. For the rest of their lives, for a thousand years, they were never hindered from saying "Don't ask me, what you know is true." Human beings must love one another. They must copulate and feel. Ride with the given.

What we'll end with.

We know that the prison population bears two million Americans at any one time. We know that there are two million different minds with trillions of individual memories and stories and thoughts; we know that each person incarcerated is a sperm or an egg bank in their own right (unless age or injury or defect has denied that rank). The latter two are the most difficult; for the wardens, for the authorities of the State, and for me; now think how difficult it must be for the ampoules of those banks: the people in the prisons themselves. Each one the owner of thoughts, memories, and a groin; and the ambiguity of the heart; and a mind; and opinions. That is a very, very serious brew. Each has been excommunicated; each excommunication comes with a different set of rules attached to it; therefore, each host, the imprisoned one, by the nature of things setting up their own aspect, their own privately rendered coloration of all of this, or they do not survive. I do not see any junctions between those privately created colorations in the minds and miens of those persons, and the rules that made such adaptation necessary. Any such junction would be prepared by legalists, with the sorting contracted to other vestments in the system. A junction is orthogonal without all of this. But there are grids. If there were not I could not have written these words. The grids between the private aspects and colorations that prisoners create to survive, and the rules of their excommunication, have their own dimensions, needs, and half-lives. Let it be then. You know, it is not as if a man or a woman in prison cannot see that industries have revolving doors and that entities that have revolving doors are industries. It is not as if the board members on the bonding authorities do not know this as thoroughly as prisoners get to know it. Any of those two million men and women at any one time passing through the revolving door will do fine with this, whether we reform the system or not. It is only we who stand to learn from them. This is the hardest way to tell it. Who of us goes through life without our own dimensions, needs, and half-lives? Who of us does not reach the carceral stage one or more times in a lifetime? Scooter Libby always has these famous words: "They turn in clusters, because their roots connect them." We owe a lot to Scooter Libby. We have no right to behave righteously with him. We owe a lot to John Lindh. Neither he nor we owe anything to CNN. CNN and Ashcroft owe a lot to John Lindh. When

CNN hawked down on the boy as he lay prostrate and manacled near Kabul, America's carceral system was shown to have ego; it was shown to be a risk to our lives. CNN put in motion the inexorability of the boy's prolonged torture and rendition; they saw fit to gill and to rive at Ashcroft's public mawing of the boy; they prepared his dogsbody before he was rendered out of sight. They wanted to own the whole of the narrative; they wanted to own all unstated rights to the boy's mental states and the placement of his body, ultimate and in-provision, living or dead, rendered or tried, and critically, the dreadful steps in-between, which we now know about. Loyalists to Centcom and Wolfowitz in 2003, CNN would have toed the same chalked-line to Trotsky and the Comintern in 1943: Basal plates turning in the dirt for old Libby. Placed by hands in the aura of my fortieth year these basal plates from Libby's reduced and saddened spade, when with all of that settled in lore after the long hour of four decades (childhood, adulthood, and fuckhood), the snow is inexorable and the children are resurrected to gain tow and toe on our ruination of the manifold, on the carrots thrown into the middle of the street simply because the writer wants to find out what the ambiguity of the stem-pushed term means (tied to a bed, having hitched himself up to its metal posts to demonstrate the inconsequence). *Carrots : Writer; Endemic : Intrinsic; Non-endemic : Extrinsic*. Black hole sun. Decolonial mantra. Mantra-time. 'Don't poop out, Culver! Not in *my* prison! Your ass is mine! Now and *after* the ass-fools discharge your ass! Hear me, Culver! Get the fuck up! This is where we live! This is where we die! Slowly! But you get the fuck up now Culver or I'll barbecue your ass like it was Harry Truman's dream of fire and destruction in the Euphrates! Do You UnderStand Me! Are you fucking dead, Culver! Your ass is hereby nuked! Corporal, come here!'

Truth is repulsive. Almost no one can stand it. I think of Scooter Libby and Vince Foster in the same thought, often. Bernie Nussbaum declared that he believed that had Vince Foster lived, no independent counsel would have been appointed during the Clinton administration. That is a very messy statement, and it is a rude and ruddy tautology (incomprehensible to me): it was Mr. Foster's death that *forced* the White House to appoint an independent counsel. I end up posturing the skeletal delineaments of my non-person standing at the bridge over the fifth lake in the posh district of Copenhagen; the geese corralling in the iced waters below the ramparts of the ancient bridge at a time in the night that I can feel is on the cusp of being too late. I observe, and I observe. I end up posturing end-games for cults and banks in Stockholm: I succumb to the presence of that syndrome; the mad and elemental presence of the carceral ego on display. You may look it up, and then tend to me. You may preen me, or refuse to forego the suggestion of a command, if you are so shy about it: that I preen you. Else, it is the default position: you forego nothing, you are not shy, you order me to preen you without hesitation. I am galled. I am Tess; Tess of The D'Urbervilles.

I was Tess at one time, two half-lives before now. Before that, I had been Alec; Alec was summoned to the war-machine; where he worked, and drove, and in the sands coughed dust and watched small Indians limping around their sleeping grounds in the daylight with petrol sticks and small eyes on watch; if it was metaphysical it was bloody metaphysical. The one who eyed me every

morning, the short one, his childishly conniving little peepers peeping out at me from between his unarched forehead and the desert scarf covering his mouth and nose and wrapped around his neck-area up onto his skull, was a special creature; passive, thoughtful; altogether dumb but not stupid. (He would not have known what it meant to be called a creature.) He always dumbfounded me; I felt the shyness in the power attributed to the color of my skin exposed; as an important part of the power, but put there by the mind as a counterweight (to keep me down, to suppress the rapacity of the central 'I' in that world, which in earthly terms is a region). They have learned about us; they listen to us, each day, filling up our tanks (before us there were others like us, and after us there would be more; but they had a sense of permanence there, a sense of responsibility that the West will never understand, which they carried with them from the Sub-continent); and we drive into oil-stained cement grounds where they pump the gas and take our signatures, and their outdoor beds under the desert sky; or inside the garages that could be looked straight at but not into (for they were dark) as we sat at our steering wheels waiting. He looks at me. He is passive, thoughtful, dumb and not stupid; he understands my carceral stage in life at this time better than I; he understands that it is not just in my life, but in human life, but that I possess this one, and that there are many like it, and that those things are a very important coupling on earth and in the world. He and his brothers have learned more about us by the osmosis of watching than we have learned about them flipping through Time magazine; of course Time doesn't report on these little ones in the desert; they are the dogsbody labor force of the Gulf, they're not very convenient.

Islam's Mecca was a historically required thing; as if the justification were necessary. The more the monkey-chain lengthened its grasp and fastened across the earth, the clearer became the heart's need for a coarser, ruder, more implacable sense of paradise; the more the mind begged for etiquette. The broken bed-frames were already foretelling the colonial in Christendom; the scent was there; so was the insomnia. The dogsbodies of the earth wanted a world not an earth. Earths alone are bare. Later came the false appositive (which was also a false positive): bolshevism and its repulsive simians and outgrowths; its existence was an arbitrary loss. People don't seem to understand; people want a world on earth, and their earth to be in a world. Survival hangs a good deal on it; we aren't that stupid. The shy minds of the children of America, grown or still young, and the blue sky doesn't help, nor do the parental chains. There are no wonders in our social domains; there are no real confusions that attorneys general can truthfully attest to. Not Waco, not Ruby Ridge, not the Murrah building, not even Jonestown and the Moscone debacle, which was an undeclared but signed surety months before the murders; accurate testaments will never come from the government. Prosecutions are sure to come; as are their cancellations when the government sees that the raw exposure and reportage will show its deep involvement; rightful titles to arraignment are sure to be denied. All of which removes the world from the earth, and the earth from the world; everything which the shy children of the mammoth have ever wanted, all of it and everything.

Approaching literature on any other terms than caution is a mistake. For example, it is absolutely similar to an efficient approach to the categories of good and evil, which are also submissive to grammar. Not doing this is always the first mistake. After that, the would-be assessment is lost. The eye, to exercise subtlety to the effect of realistic calibration of persons and events, has to move in neutrally, and hold reality to the ground, as one puts weights on one's papers when a near window is open. Human beings want this, in so far as that not only do they have to contend with living on an earth that is separated from a world (decency denied), but also in a world that has little respect for an earth that all of these people depend on for their aesthetic lives and real survival. But to have to repeat this separation when encountering novels, which are supposed to address this sort of thing and have done so throughout the history of the form, and other forms of prose, must be a major depressant for them.

Therefore, *Evil is*. One approaches it as one approaches a squandered literature. Agents of state-terror have stooled and spilled blood in their heads. Like the Chinese bodies piled high against stooled pine stumps in the bland dunes of Korea.

Agents of state-terror have stooled and spilled blood in their heads, not naturally flowing blood. Everything which the shy children of the mammoth have never wanted.

Amoral probity is also the most intense and truly psychological device we have for getting at and then telling the truth about things that have happened; it can be about Harvey Milk, Diane Feinstein, Dan White, Willy Brown and George Moscone, the Jonestown Massacre and its sly concurrence with the assassination of Moscone and Milk; to the history of the trials and legal representations of Tookie Williams; to the realistic depiction of The Crips, the Weather Underground, or the BCCI, or Sacco and Vanzetti. It doesn't matter. But neutrality is not the way; it is always a conscious evasion of responsibility, and it therefore always fails and defames justice as an idea and destroys it in the particular instance. The basic rule of inference between an analysis and an investigation of events where people are involved is—and what one later says about it, is—a pure rendering of modus ponens: $\Gamma \vdash \Sigma$. It is the only way in which jurisprudence can proceed without executing minors and doing the same with adults on the basis of unproven assumptions. MP gets killed off entirely; it is structurally violated, which leaves the traces of guilt in the minds of the persons judging and deciding on the fates of individuals, and on literary representations of individuals caught up in the maelstrom of life by their deeds and their unavoidable presence in the world.

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The Black Mountains of Afghanistan

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He woke up in the morning. The mountains towered above him. He had lost two of his friends yesterday. He wondered how long it would keep going like this. Would it happen again tomorrow? Maybe. Maybe it would. Maybe it would be him. Maybe he'd never know it. It was almost comforting. He knew it was. He could go with that. He could go with that each day. Sure that'd work. It's not like he hadn't had to find those kinds of things before. Maybe they all had one. Maybe what he was thinking was what they had thought. That was disturbing. He was in no frame of mind to do the logic of it. He could have stayed home after all. It had been his choice. Whatever anyone might say, it had been his choice and his alone. No matter anything. It was what it was now. No matter anything. It was another thing to keep him going. Did it keep them going? Did they know about it? More disturbing thoughts. Comfortingly they weren't more than they were. They didn't have a further logic. What would it be like, though? No, better not go there. He knew he was good for it but all of this death. Kids dead. Faces upturned. Auww, the hell. Death came to everyone. Whatever side you might be on, he'd be dead like they were either here or somewhere else. Those mountains were really tall. Afghanistan. What a place. The poor people. And they were really poor too. Poorer than he knew he'd ever see again. It was even poorer. There weren't words for what it was. It was like a big nothing and the nothing had swallowed up all these people and then that was how they lived and they got used to it. What a place. Maybe he'd come back some day when this was all over. But he couldn't conceive of it being over. Maybe it would end, but he didn't know what that would mean on the ground, 'cause that doesn't mean it'd be over. And then something would be over but what was it? It seemed like permanent war. Not because the military, well not just because of them, but because of how it was here. It'd always be war here. The nothing wasn't going away and that's what these people knew. Knew it and it was their environment. He thought it must have been that way for centuries. War lords going away? The people? That religion? No. So what the heck. The mountains were beautiful here though. They were dark mountains even in the day time. The rock was a black kind of rock. Those tall slabs all broken up. He wondered where that came from. The kids too, they had beautiful faces, different from ours but just the same as ours. He felt a tear in his eye. He stopped it sort of. He lay on his back on his cot and looked up at the mountains. They were so beautiful. He wondered whether the generals ever looked at them like that. Just that they

might be a little beautiful sometimes. He knew other people who did. It wasn't really the kind of thing people would think they'd talk about. The generals said they were all hiding up there in those mountains. They said that's where they'd have to go if they wanted to fight them. It made him curious when they used the 'want' and 'if', he wasn't an intellectual type but it seemed clear to him that there was a lot of subjectivity in those want-if-conditions. It seemed to him that it wasn't consistent with the objective and the desires to get it done. He thought in the beginning that that was a basic formality that didn't need to be tested by watching how people actually talked and also seemed to plan on the ground. He'd gotten used to it though. It was that nothingness that he thought swallowed up the people who lived here and they got used to it and they didn't know really anything else. It could be like that with how his people talked and seemed to base their plans on things, when on the ground they were different from the formalities of all of the stated objectives by the generals and the politicians. He didn't know very much about the politicians, but he knew enough to know that their mission ideas were like the mission ideas of the generals, a degree away maybe but that was natural. There was a reason he felt happy about some of this. He understood a lot of things that he thought his friends probably did not and he thought probably never would. He felt good to have perspective. He knew they had perspectives though just as based on thinking logic as his. When they went out none of it mattered. It didn't matter what it was. If it played out in any way when they were out no one would notice how it did or they'd be too busy trying to keep their senses and minds on the ground and measuring distances and poking around their guns usually laying them in harness across their stomachs. Some of the patrols were not really planned in a serious way, but he didn't think any other kind of planning was possible here. That's why it happened. It was just a little logic. It meant something to him to get some of this stuff right. It didn't stop people from dying or getting hurt though. But he thought that it might keep some other things from dying. Like being able to go home and think the same. Same but different. There hadn't been a need before. That would hardly have been possible. Still it was something he would have missed out on. Missing out on something that helped nobody the way he thought people were normally helped. He turned his head to look at those black slabs pouring down from the sky and he wondered whether it was really true that it would help nothing or nobody. Maybe it could help somehow. Who knew? Everything was possible. It didn't create an immediate dilemma. It was fine. And it made him feel good. That was help enough. There were things though that he knew he was keeping from himself as he kept looking up at the black slabs in the sky, how was it possible they didn't ever fall down, wasn't it like a cake-rock? He knew he was just an example, that there were many, that they all had it. Not an example because nobody who mattered cared enough, maybe they didn't see it. They all had it. How'd they bring it home? Would anybody get it? Maybe some. It was possible. Why not? Would he try? He wasn't even trying here. He was just testing. Maybe it wouldn't be a good idea to test further or again. Maybe he had a good comfort zone now. Maybe it was fine the way it was. Yeah, it must have been. It was fine the way it was. There was no reason to tempt the devil. Damn the mountains were beautiful. God how long 'r'we gonna do this?

He closed his eyes. He fell asleep. The water in the air settled on him as his body stilled. It rolled off the bag. The black mountains towered above him. Caked layers of mountain rock slab. Teetering and steadfast watchers of the keep.

He could feel the dust settling on his face. He kept his eyes shut while he dug his fingers into his skin to wipe the unharmed dew-lit beige grime from his eyelids, nose, across his cheeks, in the cavities, in the ravines, and up onto his forehead where he stopped before he reached the hairline. Without complaint. He sat part-up with his elbows behind him and looked around. Then he sat back and went back to sleep.

Later in the early day he was walking up front in the line. Bursts came from the rocks across from them at the foot of the mountains. He reflexively bent down and held his gun calmly with his eyes already focusing in the direction of the bursts of the AK47s. The MK19 PG tripod was mounted onto the ground and they launched three PGs into the front area and two into the back where he had estimated their location to have been and had told the operator of the tripod and machine. Dust and rock rose into the air and flew over at them. He had already started to walk across the field off in the direction of the exploded PGs so he just ducked a little and turned the side of his body to the flying debris. He had done this before. For that distance though the ones who had fired on them would unlikely be wounded so they'd either be gone or dead on the spot. They were gone. It was almost always like that, and when it wasn't it was just written up and didn't make a difference to anything or to the way they felt throughout the rest of the day. He turned his head and he was waved back. He completed the movement with the rest of his body with a quick radius of visual checking and then walked back in the direction from which he had come. When they had the chance all of them each at their own time would snatch a prolonged glance, a short gaze, up at the black mountains. Sometimes by sheer coincidence they'd all do it at the same time, but it was unselfconscious like the hair on their chests, they just looked around at each other and that was that and they went on, never really having stopped. He turned his head up to cake-splintered black slabs and gazed up to the tops of them, the very mountain tops where the tips of them went into the sky: the sky always seemed black in Afghanistan, like it was one with the mountain tops and the nipple-like crests of their eventual tips into the sky, even when the sky was blue and the sun was out, the sky seemed black with the mountains, and he thought that that was what made them so beautiful. He could look at them forever, but there wasn't time. But being with him as they were day to day was enough and probably more than if he just sat in a spot and watched them forever. On this one he was alone. The men in front turned their heads back to him as he was taking up the tail and he smiled because they smiled, they knew he had caught a glimpse for himself. He felt happy and smiled to himself looking down at the ground passing under him while he walked. If he could communicate this when he went home he knew that he'd be able to be normal for the rest of his life, unless something horrible intervened between now and then. But even with that he felt that it would only be with the approval of the mountains.

Before they found out that he had exquisite natural distance gauging abilities in some later tests for war aptitudes, they had placed him in the information unit where he started to learn the military home-grown computer code for the

computerized field instruments. He would be able to add code as was necessary with the cooperation of the manufacturer of the devices, but the code was essentially military property, and the military insisted on at least maintaining the upgrades and the new patches themselves. The mountains in Afghanistan were ancient and sturdy but he thought they were like giant blocks of computer-code. One small block falls and the rest falls. Not on the people who live there and who die more than he and his people do, but on them, on he and his people, on the military might. But he didn't mind if they fell on him alone one day, he thought they were beautiful. He'd get up and walk out of the rubble anyway. So would the rest of them. And they'd all look at each other and walk out, but this time they'd look at each other with a different knowledge. Maybe a knowledge that they'd go home or that they'd go on here. So would the people who lived there. He knew the mountains wouldn't hurt the people who thought they were beautiful, no it was the total machine that would be destroyed.

He slept. They'd returned to camp at around 16:00. He slept dreaming just lightly able to just feel the sweetness of getting needed and desired sleep. Things were white. The air was white. It was like three dimensional space had been painted white. Soldiers passed through the air in their whited green and black camos. They strode. They were his people. They didn't sing they didn't dance. They were soldiers. They were professionals. They had jobs to do each day, tasks, they all built up their set of rituals to conform to the tasks. Outside of patrols and missions.

He woke up and stared up at the black of the blue sky. He thought about his mother and father. Had the divorce been necessary? He looked around him getting up on his elbows. Three years. He looked at the brown dirt on the ground in the distance near the rocks at the base of the mountains. It didn't really matter, the divorce. All things were necessary. He lay back down. Birth, marriage, divorce. But all things. But he had not been blooded. Not in these mountains. With all the death and children's bodies, their dead small feet still shoed covered over with blankets, he had still not been blooded. It was a paradox. They the mountains were healing the divorce. In a new divorce. In the continuum of divorce. Of conflict. These people deserved better. All of the people here. His and theirs. They belonged to each other, these people. He belonged to his. His and theirs' could belong to each other only in the polite and respectful nod of their departure from this country.

They needed to get down the valley that day. He had been asked by the Captain to do the job that day. They were to return to where they had been yesterday. To pick up tracks, to tempt death. He knew that. He knew that in this war that was the game. They had to go out and make sure that they would tempt death. Death's temptations had a chance of working through them to tempt the enemy. They were way up the valley he thought it had been far enough. He had been a Zappa fan since he was a kid. Some were some weren't. There was nothing in between. Most people never had to worry about it since they never got exposed to his music. But now he thought of the song A Little Green Rosetta. The Captain slowed down then completely stopped. The man was trying to listen. He looked

back at him and waved him to come forward to him. He went forward and stood in a half-squatting position next to the Captain who was just a little higher than him. He was trying to listen to what the Captain was listening to or thought he was listening to. He thought he might have to listen to the Captain's mind to hear whatever the man was listening to. Then he'd hear it like him whether it was solid or not. A scream of MIGs killed the sky with an evil terror roar in the split second before he knew that he could never get into the Captain's mind. They were both the same now. Charred and no longer listening. He could not hear. He saw the Captain's corpse his head was both decapitated and not decapitated. It was like a burnt mummy's face crumbling into the dirt separately. The last in the line of Little Green Rosettas in that country. Some of the guys were moaning and calling. Before he could give some more effort at movement he saw a movement of black bodies in the distance over at the lower rocks of the mountains. White terrestrial flocks flew around them in a dance. They were moving fast. He knew they'd be there within fifty or sixty seconds maximum. He could see them in his mind butchering all of them. He knew they'd butcher the dead also. So he crossed himself and put himself on his side and twisted his neck around so that the back of his head was on the ground and his face was facing the sky. He looked up at the sky. He turned his eyes a few degrees and looked up at the black mountains of Afghanistan. He thought it was a beautiful word: Afghanistan. He knew the mountains would approve. He closed his eyes and knew that he would be normal for the rest of his life.

Schwarze Berge Afghanistan's

Schwarze Berge Afghanistan's

Er erwachte morgen. Das Gebirge ragte über ihm. Er verlor zwei von seinen Freunden gestern. Er sagte sich, wie lange so etwas Derartiges passieren wird. Würde es wieder morgen geschehen? Vielleicht. Vielleicht es würde. Vielleicht würde es ihn betreffen. Vielleicht würde er es nie wissen. Es war fast beruhigend. Er wusste, es war. Er konnte damit ausgehen. Er konnte damit jeden Tag ausgehen. Natürlich würde es funktionieren. Es ist nicht so, als ob er diese Sorten von Sachen nicht vorher finden musste. Vielleicht alle hatten eine. Vielleicht das, was er dachte, war das, was sie dachten. Das war beunruhigend. Er war nicht dazu vorbereitet, derart zu denken. Schließlich konnte er doch zu Hause bleiben. Es war seine Wahl. Was man auch immer sagen könnte, es war seine Wahl selbst. Es betraf nichts anderes. Es war das, was es jetzt war. Es betraf nichts anderes. Es war andere Sache für ihn beim Gehen festzuhalten. Hielt es sie beim Gehen fest? Wussten sie darüber? Mehr beunruhigende Gedanken. Glücklicherweise waren sie nicht mehr als sie waren. Sie hatten keine weitere Logik. Aber wie wäre es dann? Nein, besser nicht dort gehen. Er wusste, er war gut dafür außer allem von diesem Tod. Kids tot. Gesichter nach oben verkehrt. Au, die Höhle. Tod kam für jeden. Auf welcher Seite er auch immer war, er würde tot sein genauso wie sie entweder hier oder woanders auch. Dieses Gebirge war wirklich hoch. Afghanistan. Was für einen Ort. Arme Leute. Und sie waren wirklich auch arm. Ärmer als er dachte, er hat jemals gesehen. Es war sogar ärmlicher. Es gab dafür keine Worte. Es war wie großes Nichts und das Nichts schluckte all die Leute und dann das war wie sie lebten und wie sie gewöhnt daran waren. Was für einen Ort. Vielleicht würde er manchmal zurückkehren, wenn all dies vorbei ist. Aber er konnte sich nicht vorstellen, dass es überhaupt endet. Vielleicht würde es enden, aber er wusste nicht, was es im Grunde genommen heißen würde, weil das nicht heißt, es würde vorbei sein. Und dann würde etwas vorbei sein, aber was war das? Es schien wie permanenter Krieg zu sein. Nicht wegen Militär, nun nicht nur wegen ihnen, aber wegen dessen, wie es hier war. Es würde hier immer Krieg sein. Das Nichts war nicht beim Weggehen und das war's was diese Leute wussten. Sie wussten es und damit haben sie auch gelebt. Er dachte, dass es derart für Jahrhunderte sein muss. Kriegsmagnaten beim Weggehen ? Die Leute ? Die Religion ? Nein. Verflixt, na und? Das Gebirge war hier jedoch herrlich. Das Gebirge war dunkel sogar auch tagsüber. Die Berge waren schwarze Sorte von

Bergen. Diese hohen Blöcke waren alle rissig. Er würde gern wissen, woher sie kamen. Die Kids auch, sie hatten wunderschöne Gesichter, unterschiedlich von unseren aber doch dieselben wie unsere. Er spürte Träne in seinem Auge. Er hat sie unterdrückt. Er lag auf seinem Rücken auf seiner Liege und schaute zu dem Gebirge auf. Es war so herrlich. Er würde gern wissen, ob die Generale überhaupt jemals das Gebirge so betrachteten. Genauso konnten sie manchmal ein bisschen herrlich sein. Er kannte andere Leute, die es auch so machen konnten. Es war wirklich nicht die Sorte von Sachen, worüber Leute denken, sie würden darüber sprechen. Die Generale sagten, sie verbergen sich alle in diesem Gebirge. Sie sagten, dass es dort ist, wohin sie gehen müssen, wenn sie mit ihnen kämpfen wollen. Es machte ihn neugierig, wenn sie 'wollen' und 'wenn' benutzten, er war kein intellektueller Typ, aber es schien klar für ihn zu sein, dass es dort jede Menge von Subjektivität in diesen wollen-wenn-Konditionen lag. Es schien ihm, dass es dem Ziel und der Sehnsucht nach dessen Erfüllen nicht entsprechend war. Er dachte am Anfang, dass dies eine grundlegende Formalität war, die nicht getestet brauchte durch Beobachten, wie Leute eigentlich sprechen und wie sie aus dem Grund zu planen scheinen. Er gewöhnte sich jedoch daran. Es war das Nichts, das seiner Meinung nach die Leute schluckte, die hier lebten und die sich daran gewöhnten und sie wussten wirklich nichts anderes. Es konnte sein wie das, wie seine Leute sprachen und wie sie schienen ihre Pläne damit auf Sachen zu begründen, wenn sie im Grunde genommen von Formalitäten von allen von Generalen und Politikern festgestellten Zielen unterschiedlich waren. Er wusste nicht sehr viel über Politiker, aber er wusste genug zu wissen, dass ihre Missionsideen wie die Missionsideen von Generalen waren, eine Stufe weg vielleicht, aber es war natürlich. Es gab Grund, warum er sich deswegen glücklich fühlte. Er verstand viele Sachen, die seine Freunde seiner Meinung nach wahrscheinlich nicht verstanden und auch seiner Meinung nach nie verstehen würden. Er fühlte gut, dass er eine Perspektive hat. Er wusste, sie hatten Perspektiven jedoch nur auf der Logik der Gedanken begründend wie seine. Als sie weggingen, es machte nichts. Es lag nichts daran, was es war. Wenn es sich irgendwie abspielte, wenn sie draußen waren, niemand würde bemerken, wie es war oder sie würden mit großer Mühe versuchen, ihre Sensen und Mienen beim Boden festzuhalten und die Distanzen zu messen und ihr Gewehr, das ihnen in Uniformen über ihre Bäuche hing, hin und her zu schieben.

Einige Wachposten waren wirklich auf ernster Weise nicht geplant, aber er dachte, dass keine andere Art von Planen hier möglich ist. Das war der Grund, warum es passiert ist. Es war schließlich ziemlich logisch. Es hieß etwas für ihn, um dieses in Ordnung zu bringen. Es hielt jedoch nicht die Leute vom Sterben oder Verletzen. Aber er dachte, dass es einige andere Sachen vom Sterben abhalten könnte. Wie imstande sein, nach Hause zu gehen und auf derselben Weise nachzudenken. Auf derselben Weise, aber unterschiedlich. Es gab kein Bedürfnis vorher. Es wäre kaum möglich gewesen. Trotzdem es war etwas, was ihm fehlen würde.

Fehlen von etwas, das niemandem so half, wie er dachte, dass es den Leuten normalerweise helfen würde. Er drehte seinen Kopf, um diese schwarzen aus

dem Himmel tiefenden Blöcke anzuschauen, und er dachte, er würde gern wissen, ob es wirklich wahr war, dass es niemandem oder nichts hilft. Vielleicht könnte es irgendwie helfen. Wer weiß? Alles war möglich.

Es schuf kein unmittelbares Dilemma. Es war gut. Er hatte davon gutes Gefühl. Dies war Hilfe genug. Es gab Dinge jedoch, über die er wusste, er hält ständig weit von sich, genauso wie er auf schwarze Blöcke im Himmel schaute, wie es möglich war, dass sie überhaupt nie gefallen sind, waren sie nicht wie Kuchen-Felsen ? Er wusste, dass er nur ein Beispiel war, dass es viele gab, dass alle es haben. Nicht ein Beispiel, weil niemand, den es betraf, sich genug kümmerte, vielleicht sahen sie es nicht. Sie alle hatten es.

Wie würden sie es nach Hause bringen? Würde jemand es erreichen? Vielleicht einige. Es war möglich. Warum nicht ? Würde er es versuchen? Er hat das sogar hier nicht einmal versucht. Er hat nur getestet. Vielleicht war es keine gute Idee weiter oder wieder zu testen. Vielleicht befand er sich jetzt in einer guten bequemen Zone. Vielleicht war es gut in der Art, wie es war. Ja, es musste so sein. Es war gut in der Art, wie es war. Es war kein Grund, den Teufel anzureizen. Verflixt, das Gebirge war herrlich. Gott, wie lange werden wir es noch machen?

Er schloss seine Augen. Er schlief ein. Wasser in der Luft setzte sich an ihm, wie sich sein Körper beruhigte. Es rollte aus dem Rucksack. Das schwarze Gebirge ragte über ihm. Abgefallene Schichten bergiger Felsenblocken. Balancierende und feste Wachposten von Beständigkeit.

Er konnte spüren, wie sich Staub auf sein Gesicht setzte. Mit geschlossenen Augen grub er mit seinen Fingern in seine Haut, um den mit Tau befeuchteten beige Schmutz von seinen Augenlidern, Nase, über seine Wangen, in Höhlungen, in Rillen zu wischen und nach oben bis seine Stirn, wo er stoppte, bevor er Haarlinie erreichte. Ohne Beschwerde. Er lag mit seinen Ellbogen hinter ihm und schaute herum. Dann lehnte er sich zurück und schlief wieder ein.

Am späten Morgen ging er vorn in die Linie. Die Ausbrüche kamen von Bergen gegenüber am Fuß des Gebirges. Er beugte sich reflexiv nach unten und hielt sein Gewehr ruhig mit seinen Augen bereits schauend in die Richtung der Ausbrüche von AK47-en. Die MK19 PG Ständer war auf dem Boden gestellt und sie warfen drei Granate in die Frontzone und zwei nach hinten, wo er ihre vorherige Lokalisation ahnte und sagte das dem Operator von Ständer und Maschinen. Staub und Steinen stiegen in die Luft und fliehen über ihnen. Er begann über das Feld zu kommen in der Richtung von ausgebrochenen Granaten, so dass er sich nur ein bisschen beugte und den Teil seines Körpers zu den fliehenden Bruchstücken drehte. Er machte das schon vorher. Für diese Entfernung jedoch würde derjenige, der auf sie schoss, nur unwahrscheinlich verletzt sein, so dass sie entweder gegangen sind oder tot auf dem Platz waren. Sie sind gegangen. Es war fast immer so, und wenn es nicht so war, dann wurde es nur niedergeschrieben und es hat sich nichts daran verändert, wie sie sich für den Rest des Tages fühlten. Er drehte seinen Kopf und fiel zurück. Er beendete die Bewegung mit dem Rest seines Körpers und schnell schaute herum und dann ging er zurück in der Richtung, woher er gekommen ist. Wenn

sie Chance hatten, alle von ihnen, jeder in seiner eigenen Zeit würde lang oder kurz das schwarze Gebirge anschauen. Manchmal in purem Zufall haben alle im gleichem Moment geschaut, aber es war unbedacht wie Haare auf ihrem Brust, sie schauten nur herum aufeinander und das war alles und sie setzten fort, sie haben in Wirklichkeit nie aufgehört.

Er drehte seinen Kopf hoch zu schwarzen Bergen ähnlich den geschnitten Kuchen und schaute zu deren Köpfen, die höchsten Köpfe vom Bergen ragten in den Himmel: der Himmel schien immer schwarz in Afghanistan zu sein, genauso wie es eins mit den Berggipfeln war und die Bergkämme ähnlich einer Erhebung ragten von eventuellen Höhen in den Himmel, auch wenn der Himmel blau und Sonne nicht zu sehen waren, der Himmel schien durch das Gebirge schwarz zu sein, und er dachte, dass das das war, was es so herrlich machte. Er konnte es ewig anschauen, aber es blieb dafür keine Zeit. Aber mit den Bergen zu sein, dass sie mit ihm Tag für Tag waren, war genug und wahrscheinlich war es mehr, als wenn er nur im Punkt saß und sie für ewig betrachtete. Hier war er allein. Die Männer vorn drehten ihre Köpfe zurück zu ihm, als er hintere Position nahm und er lachte, weil sie lachten, sie wussten, er behielt den Blick für selbst. Er fühlte sich glücklich und lächelte zu ihm selbst, schauend unten auf den unter seinen Schritten weiterlaufenden Boden, während er ging. Wenn er dies beschreiben könnte, wenn er nach Hause komme, er wusste, dass er imstande wäre, für den Rest seines Lebens normal zu sein, sofern nichts Grausames zwischen jetzt und das Künftige passiert. Aber auch so fühlte er, dass es dazu nur mit der Abstimmung der Berge käme.

Bevor sie feststellten, dass er herrliche Fähigkeiten fürs Messen der Entfernungen hat, die sich in einigen späteren Tests für Kriegsfähigkeiten auswiesen, stellten sie ihn in die Informationseinheit, wo er militärischen heimischen Computer Code für digitalisierte Feldinstrumente zu lernen begann. Er würde imstande sein, den Code zuzufügen, wie es notwendig war mit der Zusammenarbeit von Produzenten von Einrichtungen, aber der Code war im wesentlichen ein militärisches Eigentum, und das Militär beharrte zumindest auf der Instandhaltung der Aktualisierungen und neuen Korrekturen selbst. Das Gebirge in Afghanistan war altertümlich und massiv, aber seiner Meinung nach war es wie gigantische Blöcke von Computer Code. Ein kleiner Block fällt und der Rest fällt. Nicht auf Leute, die hier leben und die mehr als er und seine Leute sterben, aber auf sie, auf ihn und seine Leute, auf die militärische Kraft. Aber es würde ihn nicht stören, wenn sie auf ihn selbst eines Tages fallen würden, er überlegte, dass sie so herrlich sind. Er würde aufstehen und weggehen aus dem Schotter jedenfalls. So würde der Rest von ihnen tun. Und sie alle würden aufeinander schauen und weggehen, aber in diesem Moment würden sie aufeinander mit einer unterschiedlichen Kenntnis schauen. Vielleicht mit der Kenntnis, dass sie nach Hause gehen oder dass sie weitergehen. So würden es die Leute machen, die hier leben. Er wusste, dass das Gebirge nicht die Leute verletzt, die denken, es sei herrlich, nein, es war die ganze Maschine, die vernichtet würde.

Er schlief. Sie kamen zurück in das Lager ungefährlich um 16:00. Er schlief träumend nur leicht, um fähig zu sein, gerade das Süße von dem benötigten und ersehnten Schlaf zu fühlen. Die Sachen waren weiß. Die Luft war weiß. Es war,

als wäre der dreidimensionale Raum weiß gestrichen. Die Soldaten passierten durch die Luft in ihren weiß gewordenen grünen und schwarzen maskierten Anzügen. Sie schritten. Sie waren seine Leute. Sie sangen nicht, sie tanzten nicht. Sie waren Soldaten. Sie waren Professionale. Sie hatten jeden Tag Arbeit zu machen, Aufgaben, jeder hat seine eigenen Ritualen aufgebaut, die zum Anpassen an die Aufgaben halfen. Außer der Wache und Missionen.

Er erwachte und starrte hoch auf das Schwarze des blauen Himmels. Er dachte über seine Mutter und seinen Vater nach. War die Scheidung notwendig? Er schaute herum sich auf seinen Ellbogen stützend. Drei Jahre. Er schaute auf den braunen Schmutz auf dem Boden in Entfernung nahe den Bergen am Fuße des Gebirges. Es machte nichts, die Scheidung. Alle Sachen waren notwendig. Er legte sich zurück. Geburt, Ehe, Scheidung.

Aber alle Dinge. Aber er vergoss sein Blut noch nicht. Nicht in diesen Bergen. Mit all dem Tod und Körpern von Kindern, ihre toten kleinen Füße immer noch beschuht, bedeckt mit Decken, er vergoss immer noch nicht sein Blut. Es war Paradox. Das Gebirge heilte die Scheidung. In eine neue Scheidung. In der Kontinuität der Scheidung. Von Konflikt. Diese Leute verdienten besser. All die Leute hier. Seine und die des Gebirges. Sie gehörten zueinander, diese Leute. Er gehörte zu seinen. Seine und die des Gebirges könnten zueinander gehören nur in höflicher und respektvoller Zustimmung über ihren Wegzug aus diesem Land.

Jenen Tag brauchten sie durch das Tal hinunterzusteigen. Er wurde vom Kapitän beantragt, diese Arbeit jenen Tag durchzuführen. Sie sollten dorthin zurückkehren, wo sie gestern waren. Um zu Strecken auszuwählen, um den Tod zu reizen. Er wusste das. Er wusste, dass es in diesem Krieg ein Spiel war. Sie mussten rausgehen und sich vergewissern, dass sie den Tod reizen werden. Das Anreizen des Todes hatte ihnen Chance zum Anreizen des Feindes gegeben. Sie waren auf dem Wege unten im Tal, als er dachte, es war schon weit genug. Er war seit seiner Kindheit ein Zappa Fan. Einige waren, einige nicht. Es war nichts inzwischen. Die meisten Leute brauchten sich nie zu kümmern, weil sie nie seiner Musik ausgesetzt waren. Aber jetzt dachte er über den Song Kleine grüne Rosette. Der Kapitän verlangsamte, dann stoppte er ganz. Der Mann bemühte sich zuzuhören. Er schaute zurück auf ihn und winkte zu ihm, damit er zu ihm nach vorne kommt. Er kam vorn und stand in der Position in halber Hocke neben dem Kapitän, der nur ein bisschen größer war als er. Er versuchte dem zuzuhören, was der Kapitän hörte, oder dem, was er dachte, dass der Kapitän zuhört. Er dachte, er muss der Miene des Kapitäns zuhören, um zu was auch immer zuzuhören, dem der Mann zuhörte. Dann würde er das hören was er, ob es auch gibt oder nicht. Ein Schall von MIGs zerbrach den Himmel mit einer teuflischen Schrei in einem Bruchteil der Sekunde, bevor er wusste, er kann nie zur Miene des Kapitäns gelangen. Sie waren jetzt beide dasselbe. Verbrennt und nicht mehr zuhörend. Er konnte nicht hören. Er sah den Leichnam des Kapitäns, sein Kopf war fast vom Körper gerissen. Es war wie verbranntes Gesicht einer Mumie, die sich in den Schmutz getrennt krümelt. Das letzte in der Linie der Kleinen grünen Rosette in diesem Land. Einige von Kerlen stöhnten und schrien. Bevor

er sich um Bewegung bemühen konnte, sah er eine Bewegung von schwarzen Körpern in Entfernung bei den niedrigeren Bergen des Gebirges. Weiße irdische Schare fliehen um sie im Tanz. Sie bewegten sich schnell. Er wusste, sie werden hier in höchstens fünfzig oder sechzig Sekunden sein. Er konnte sie in seiner Miene sehen, wie sie alle massakrieren. Er wusste, sie würden auch die toten massakrieren. So bekreuzigte er sich und drehte sich auf die Seite und verdrehte seinen Hals, so dass das Genick jetzt auf dem Boden war und sein Gesicht zum Himmel sah. Er schaute hoch zum Himmel. Er drehte seine Augen um ein paar Grade und schaute hoch zu dem schwarzen Gebirge von Afghanistan. Er wusste, dass das Gebirge zustimmen würde. Er schloss seine Augen und wusste, er wird normal für den Rest seines Lebens sein.

Between Heaven and Earth

Foreword

We have four boys in this novel. Each has emerged from the phase of early childhood. They are starving and they are dressed in rags. Their hygiene has been abandoned: They are orphans who have been criminalized by the state and made pariahs by their society. Of them, Bartholomew is the most injured, both physically and mentally. The question is, then: Why would we be interested in these boys? Because, one is *strong*, the other is *quick and cautious*, the other is *suffering*, the other is *calm and social*; because they were orphaned by the terrible fates of their parents and ostracized by the state and by their society but, in the face of all of this, construct and preserve among themselves a psychologically and physically real world of social life, self-respect, and dignity.

They camp and end up residing in an old, deserted colonial house in a garden of an equal age; they fix the electricity, set up watch-points and shifts, and start to live: scavenged bread from the shop-keepers' stalls, a small garden of shallots and other bulbous and energy-laden roots in their patch of ground around the back of the house and ruin; they begin to keep their bodies clean, establish civilized habits which exhibit to us and demonstrate to themselves their aspirations and fundamental humanity. But they also maintain a constant fear of, or cautious management of their exposure to, vigilantes who might put them in wards or prisons. *This* is a world of humanity in all of its forms.

The opening pages of the book are very attractive. The author succeeds in describing quite real boys, with distinctive personalities. This proves indeed a great artistic gift. While reading I had the feeling that these four boys are indeed real, vivid characters.

There is a scene, at the beginning of the book, which is absolutely remarkable: Bartholomew is carried into the middle of the river in order to meet his dead parents, who may have drowned there. But the boy clearly believes in meeting them, which is unforgettable. One wonders which indeed is the real life: ours, the one of the adults, or this fictitious life which this boy believes in with such candor.

The boys are indeed real. One of them draws birds in a notebook while the author intimates that that young artist, or all of the boys together, are thinking that "the truth has been ever repulsive to humans"; one of them dreams of a girl. Life is indeed in all of these. One day, Bartholomew dies suddenly, and the boys sink his corpse in the river. A tragic scene.

In the second part of the book we are told about the childhood of little Bartholomew. How his mother caresses him and how happy he was walking

hand in hand with his father. This is indeed pure happiness and the book succeeds to convey it to the reader in its purest form. One day little Bartholomew leaves his home, and is taken in by the friendly nomads of the steppes. He discovers there that "people aren't as they seem." He starts to become "old." Bartholomew eventually falls into the hands of vigilantes who put him in a sort of jail where he meets his future playmates and co-survivalists Jude, Evan, and Piers. Bartholomew started to know the world with this event.

The book is about how children, in a heavenly state, begin to know the earthly world. How much of an illusion are both. How our vital instincts create these illusions. How our subjectivity reigns upon our lives. The book is a remarkable piece of art. "Will we ever have day here?" asks the young and tormented Bartholomew. On this Earth?

The book ends with narrating, in the same intense style, Piers', Jude's and Evan's lives as adults. But what about Bartholomew?

The book contains at least twice the sentence "Bartholomew was not stupid." Indeed, we are not stupid. Only that this world is tragic. And cleverness does not help. What, who, then? This is a great question the book leaves for the readers. Bartholomew has an exceptional vital instinct. Is it not that our "whole world's life is an eternal death's sleep"? This is what this book teaches us.

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Chapter One

THE FOUR BOYS

One

The children came out of the bushes. They were dressed in rags. Their faces were dirty. Their bodies were starved; one motioned to the others, 'Let's go!' They shuffled across the old cement sidewalks to the other side of the road. Although there were many people walking and pulling their carts on the road, they were not noticed. They took advantage of the bustle. They were on a small copse of city-trees which was located on the grounds of an old colonial building hidden in the deep shade of much higher trees that had been planted a century before. The windows were shrouded in even deeper shades, with ivy climbing up across the glass panes and over the wooden eaves and old shingled wood. The youngest boy was named Evan. He was the runt, not just because of his age but because of his apparently stunted size. But he was strong, with sinewy muscles that were like long, thick wreathes. He was mentally the strongest also, able to conjure solutions on the go; the boys needed this. The oldest boy, Jude, was tall and gangly; he spoke in great speed, but was the most cautious of them; he was able to slow his heartbeat to twenty-two beats a minute in situations which required that the boys maintain silence and immobility; this was able to create a motionless and soundless state for all of them; his mind was as quick as his tongue, and even though he was awkward and gangly, his reflexes and instincts were assets to the group. Bartholomew, the boy who's age fell in the middle, was the one whose physical and mental injuries were the worst; his fingertips had been burned, the tips were raw and soft, but callused enough for him to display dexterity in situations that required mechanical talent; his neck, his back and parts of his upper legs displayed long, cleanly slit scars; the scars that one or more knives had done. He was the hardest. His jaws set firm, he was always on watch. Evan conferred with him often. The fourth boy, Piers, whose age he did not know himself, was calm, social, and seemed to be the most satisfied with life. That was his asset. The group very much depended on him; it was not his wisdom that they depended on, it was his cool, distinctive humanity.

Each boy was ready to go. They didn't confer, they just went. They were boys, meaning their form of communication was simple, rarefied, with the unselfconscious play of young minds, with the difference that these boys had been abandoned by their parents and by the state and were unwanted and undesired by all and any; all of these lost ones, the thousands of them, were social pariahs.

They walked with soft steps towards the veranda of the shaded building. Evan looked back at the three boys behind him as he paused on the creaky and cracked and weathered steps; 'Let's go,' he said in a mild voice. They all went up and each took on a specific task; one examined the windows and its panes for entrance, the other the door, the other to see if they could scale to the second storey up the pillars to the roof of the veranda and on up; Piers was checking to see if there was an entrance through the floor boards. They heard a soft but crisp breaking of glass; Evan had taken the first quadrant of a window with the whip-snap action of his second set of knuckles on his right hand; he did the other three quickly, efficiently. There was no haste in any of them, they were professional survivors. Evan went in first. Then Bartholomew, Jude, and last Piers. Jude's long and gangly body required more effort of it to get it through than the others; he tore a bit of his shirt on an edge of glass that Evan had not removed as he tried to put one arm in before the other. Piers had just told him to watch out, to which Jude gave an annoyed grunt; Piers said, 'they're you're rags.' Then Jude felt the tear just as his arm went through; he looked back at Piers with an expression of unhumbled and annoyed acknowledgement, as if any form of dispensation to Piers would be apostasy. Piers smiled and grinned, his innocence intact. Evan motioned to the boys to come over to him, where he was standing and examining an old burnt-out electrical box. 'Look at this,' he said. All of the boys went over to him. Bartholomew approached the box, looked at the messy and dusty wiring closely; he turned his head half-way toward the boys and said, 'We can use this.' Jude was incredulous and asked, 'just how?' 'It's easy,' Bartholomew said. 'We rewire it here, right at the box. Then extend it out, we'll graft the grass over it. They haven't metered this area in twenty years. Don't worry about it.' Evan nodded, then the others did. In a few days they had electricity. They set up watch points and shifts for each of them. They'd stay in that old colonial building for a whole year. Unnoticed. Protected by the deep shade of the colonial-era trees. Made healthy by the restorative presence of a century of grass, bushes, plants, bugs, rodents, moisture, and half a century of silence. There they grew into habits, routines, organized tasks, meal times, reconnaissance and outing and food-quest times into which, sitting down together, they built and revised contingency plans so that they would not lose what they had; and a small communal jargon of words and expressions. They put on weight, and their stools were healthy. They brought in water to the porcelain tubs and kept themselves clean; they sewed their clothes; they killed roaches, took preparations against lice and bed mites, and even watched after their teeth. It had been years for all of them; after the years it had been weeks of planning to get into that old colonial house. Observations of the right stoppage-times to shuffle themselves across the road to the bushes on the opposite side, from where they could step directly onto the grass; and the fail-safe plans that all four of them had had to build with consideration of the fact that they might

all be taken to different ward prisons, or that any of them might be taken there or knifed by vigilantes or caged and enslaved by keepers of shops.

Two

One day Bartholomew snuck away to the yellow river out on the infinite outskirts of the city. He wanted to remember his parents. He had to contrive some pieces of formed wood that he could strap to his feet and lower legs so that he would seem to be as tall as an adult. He wore an old man's robe so that his face would be covered and the awkwardness in his walk would look to be an old man's painful and deformed movements. He was going to revisit the spirits of his parents; dead parents whose spirits floated on top of the river and entreated him daily, tangled together in an oath of yellow-river mist and smog and stretching their arms towards the shore like long dead trees. He had not been there for several months. His costume and his overall height-contrivance worked very well, since he encountered no problems, no notice. He removed his clothing so that he was completely naked. He lay down on the mud bank and let the heels of his feet sit in the murky water. The water lapped a little, but constantly; his heels were sunk in the floor of the mud after several minutes, so he just, as always, let his knees bend to it as far as was possible; the rest, he let the stress be absorbed by the muscles behind his shins. His parents woke up in the middle of the river; they entreated him with their long arms. He pretended it was like any other day and that he was not with them but with Evan, Jude, and Piers, somewhere in the city. The arms like wreathes grabbed him and took him up and brought him to the middle of the river where the water swirled and appointed him as witness of the oath that kept his dead mother and father tangled like seaweed together for eternity. His mother took saliva from her mouth and rubbed it into his fingertips; she kissed the scars on his legs and his back and his neck; his father praised him for overcoming the disability, that he was a good son to come and see them and to help take care of the three other boys like him. His father knew that his son could not be adjured forever. It was his hope, his faith, his fear, and his knowledge; a knowledge that his dead wife would deny to him. But his father's resistance was thorough.

Three

Evil is. Approaching it on any other terms than caution is a mistake; it is always the first mistake. After that, the would-be assessment is lost. The world, which is a given, is better scanned as a mess that is cumbered and disencumbered by many different horizons. The eye, to exercise subtlety to the effect of realistic

calibration, has to move in neutrally, and hold reality to the ground, as one puts weights on one's papers when a nearby window is open. Each of the boys had learned this. Each of them sustained the weight, the substance, the material, and the degree of this learning. Each one of them on their way to adolescence, but each one of them with a child's mind; each one of them with a mind which he had to fortify for survival in their world; the source of their joy and pain, of their self-knowledge, and hardest of all, of their day to day self-assessment. Because of its necessity it could be cruel; because of that cruelty they could exercise a separate cruelty on themselves. So they learned caution from all angles.

Four

Returning to the old colonial ruin Bartholomew fought with himself over the very ramparts of his existence, which seemed to be all of a kind. Of the system of child ward prisons through which he had passed, of the guards and their wands, of the siblings whose existence he could only suppose (a thought which he suppressed because he believed that they had undergone unhappiness and trials).

Late in the night, under the cover of the darkness that was animated by the rebounding elation that he always found in the shade of the colonial era trees when it was late in the night, Bartholomew climbed through the window of the old colonial ruin. Piers saw him. Piers sat up on his mat wholly invisible in the dark; he was the only one awake. As Bartholomew walked towards his mat in the darkness, Piers said, "How is your dear mother? How is your blessed father, Bartholomew?" "They are fine," Bartholomew quietly replied, only half-gathering the meaning of the questions, since he was tired but also still riven by the elation of the dark canopy just outside the window. "You saw them?" "Of course," said Bartholomew softly, tolerantly, latching on to the unique presence of Piers at last. "That's good," said Piers: "You sleep now." "Yes," said Bartholomew; all of the boys slept, except for Piers, who lay awake on shift, his pleasant mind turning things ineluctably, as ineluctable as the kissable black hair fallen over the forehead onto the lips of a woman, of whom he dreamed, whom he flattered and praised each night with those wide, searching black eyes that lent him his gradualist mien.

Five

Jude was the first up in the morning, as he was on most mornings. He would have been even if the shift was not his to cover. He washed himself. He looked in the mirror at his long and tree-like naked body, unhurt and proud, and he looked

harder, and he pursued the passion of his thoughts as he was rarely able to; he lifted his arm to gaze at the opened crevice beneath his armpit, and tilted his head ever so slightly at the sight. He put his arm down and stood fully relaxed, arms at his sides, muscles loose for several seconds, then with a firmness began to wipe down his arms with the wet and lightly soaped towel. He turned around with a movement that was abrupt only by comparison to his previous quietest engagement with himself in the mirror, and slipped on his shorts and walked into the main room where the other boys were now up or getting up. He climbed out of the window and onto the veranda, where he sat on its cracked wooden deck and then lay still and kept his ears open and his eyes ready. There was a soft breeze that had the weighty warmth of the city in it but was cooled by the jagged shade of the quiet, secluded colonial ground into which each of the boys had placed themselves; that breeze filtered through Jude's hair and his bangs were sent up and down invisible to the eye and felt as a small insect-like benign swath across his forehead and on the bridge of his nose, enough to make him sigh as boys rarely do. He said to himself, "This day will be my day." He intended to speak to no one today unless it was really necessary; he intended to live today.

His mind was very active. He scanned the heights of the trees. He sat with his folded hands on his folded legs. The world became green for him. The moisture in the earth under the grass was verdant and held sway over that green world; he would have liked to have remembered things, but he didn't want to at this moment. He felt fine without the memories, he felt the sense of happiness. He felt no compunction about memories right now; and about that he was conscious and happy, which was the main mark of a difference between previous lulls and periods of relaxation and that which was now. The difference was critical for him, he paused with his long gangly chin lifted towards the trees and smiled at the wonder of it. He thought to himself, 'My old body is not so bad after all.'

Six

Perhaps the greatest thing that Evan had accomplished over the years of his life in ward prisons and out of ward prisons 'free' in the city, where he was incarcerated by his status as a social pariah and its siege on his existence, was the unconsciously willed formation of his congenitally strong mind into a tough skein and ampoule that kept a constant corridor open to his anxiousness and fear. That put him miles ahead of most of mankind. With what he did know about it, he was determined to use it.

By late morning Bartholomew with the help of a drowsed Piers had fed all of the boys a breakfast of three eggs boiled and split up between them, some wedges cut away from cultivated basal roots that Piers had planted in a patch of ground which he had cultivated on one side of the house on Evan's insistence as well as to his own gratification; and fine bread that had been rusted with mildew before they took it back to the ruin from one of the empty markets. In the kitchen



they cut and scraped the mildew away. Those parts which were cut off but which were still calculable pieces were put next to the knives in a corner for Evan.

Evan sat out on the opposite end of the veranda from Jude who was on shift still. Jude was gazing up at the trees. Piers had already brought him his breakfast but Jude had waved him away with a cursory sudden outbreak of his long swinging right arm. Piers was quick to notice that Jude had on the same shirt he had torn when climbing through the window and had sewn up since then. Piers decided to make a verbal notice of it to Jude: Jude completely ignored it. Piers' inner grin was as wide as the sun must have been above the canopy of trees. The sun was managing to shine splayed divisions of light

through the trees in scattered and quietly mobile patterns across the grounds and in the flora and over onto the veranda.

Evan had a few pieces of the mildewed crust in his hand. He was already chewing on another piece. He chewed slowly, savoring the aftertaste of real bread combined with the knowledge that the fungus itself was medicinal; this gave him great pleasure as he also enjoyed the sunlight and gazed out towards the line of trees. Evan was as unaware of Jude on the other side of the veranda as Jude was unaware of him on his side.

Seven

A ménage spreads across the earth. It's called marriage. It is religiously followed. The evidence is messianic. But it was not built for the shy ones—the existence of an earth does not imply the existence of a world. Like decoys for adults, children are the first casualties of the separation, although not the last. But they have a gift: they can *see*. And they are *quick*. And they are *agile*.

Piers swung down on a rope-swing tied to a thick branch on one of the trees. He landed on the grass and fell down in a roll. He ran up to Jude who was now standing arms front and hands resting on the broken down banister of the veranda. Piers said, "Who did you think I was?" Jude quickly responded, "An idiot. I didn't need to think." Evan had been talking with Bartholomew over on the other

side of the veranda. He walked over to Jude and Piers, Jude bent over the banister glaring at Piers like he would kill him. "Piers," Evan said softly. "If you fall and break your leg, what are we going to do with you?" Piers shrugged a little and indicated that he didn't know. Evan continued, "The street is outside there. You were both too loud. The trees are



a thick cover and so is the distance and the fact that no one goes in to this place, but that all counts for nothing if someone really does hear us, or sees a monkey flying through the trees. We'd be lucky if they did think it was a monkey." Jude spoke up: "Piers, are you a monkey?" Piers got on his tip-toes and bounced twice. Jude pretended that he didn't see this and reformed himself: he directed a casual and disdainful watch out into the walls of the trees. Evan walked away and back to Bartholomew, who was whittling a piece of wood with a small knife and had tipped his eyes intermittently to watch the event on the other side of the veranda. Piers shrugged and walked around the old colonial ruin to his patch of land. He knew he would be gratified there.

Eight

That the truth is repulsive to most human beings is one fact that has stood the test of time. Evan conferred with Bartholomew about the possibility of fighting. He said it would be useful to first identify the types of targets. Bartholomew expressed an acknowledgement that this was the true way of approaching the problem. So Evan continued. Bartholomew was thinking how resistant his father had been. How naïve his mother. He didn't want to repeat that same combination of mistakes. Their mistakes had had the most horrible of consequences. His brow became furrowed as he thought about it, the pain of the memory and realization of it was too great. His chest filled with salt and his eyes began to push water from behind. He shook his head violently when Evan was not looking and re-composed himself. He decided on a tactic: He expressed to Evan his doubt about the abilities of Piers and Jude to carry out acts of external defiance. He did not specify whether the abilities in doubt were of a physical or moral nature, or both. This idea did not seem to bother Evan. This worried Bartholomew. The conversation was soon over with Evan

unworried. Bartholomew left him alone in his own thoughts, where Evan never felt alone.

Two weeks passed. Evan had been ruminating on matters but he had not talked to anyone about them, except with Bartholomew on two occasions, privately and with no great exertion or length of time. Bartholomew knew from his long relationship with Evan that Evan needed someone to bounce his ideas off of after long periods of rumination or thought, and that for this Evan was only fully confident in his, Bartholomew's, intelligence and basic understanding of the world. Piers and Jude were aware of this reality in the ruin and on the old colonial grounds of the ruin, which were drawing in several species of birds who were collecting themselves there at this time of year. Piers was very keen on the birds and had decided to keep a notebook on them. He would outline their frames and distinguish their feathers with drawings of careful precision. He kept written notes that no one really understood next to the pictures or on separate pages. The notes obviously gratified Piers. For he would re-read his entries sitting on the steps of the old veranda very frequently. Jude was surprised at how seriously Piers was involved in his studies, he thought it uncharacteristic of him. One day he walked up to Piers as Piers was walking in intermittent and broken strides, turning his body in different directions and lifting his head up and then lowering it down, his notebook open in his hands, a pencil stub behind his right ear. He walked up to Piers and had to distract him with his hands to gain his attention, and he said to him as Piers suddenly looked at him squarely, "Piers, are you a bird?" Uncharacteristically Piers did not have an immediate reaction or even a characteristically delayed answer to the question with his wit or quirky humor, nor did his face change its expression of interrupted studiousness. He came-to in a moment and shook his head a little with his eyes closed, and looked as if he needed a good splash of cold water on his cheeks to wake him up. He responded matter-of-factly, "No, but they are interesting. Don't you think?" Jude actually smiled, and said, "Yes, they are interesting Piers." He paused, and then said, "How is your notebook going then?" "Very well," said Piers. "I'm making drawings and taking notes. They change positions for different reasons, but I don't understand them." "The birds, you mean," said Jude. "Yes, the birds." Piers took a handle on the book and opened it to a page that he seemed to like and to be looking for, and said, "You see this one? He, or she, I don't know its sex, but she almost never moves." Jude was interested in that to an extent but not so much to comment. He said, "The drawings are very efficient. But I couldn't make out your handwriting if it were my own." "My handwriting has always been like that," said Piers: "It is a scrawl that only I can read, not by intention, it just is." Jude changed the subject: "Have you noticed Evan, the way he's been spending his time I mean?" "He's quiet, he's relaxing. Evan likes to think. He's a thinker," said Piers. "Yes," said Jude: "I will come and look at your notebook tomorrow if you have any new pictures." "I'll be here," replied Piers.

Jude noticed that Piers had given up minding his patch of ground on the side of the ruin. He scratched his head, his mind was turning, his eyes moved around and took in the circumference of the garden and the grounds and the ruin. Then he looked up at the whittling Bartholomew up on the right side of the veranda where he seemed to spend all of his time now, like it was his own corner. Then

he saw and eyed Evan as Evan absentmindedly made his way through and out of the window and sat on his small stool in what seemed to be his corner on his side of the veranda. The reflexive and distinct instincts that were native to Jude and which had been such an asset to the boys on the streets in situations which had no apparent logic to them, had become muted and dormant since their stay in the old colonial ruin. It was because the quiet of the ruin had allowed him greater powers of intellectual reflection. A satisfaction with his awkward body had come to replace his old shame and dissatisfaction with it. It happened when he looked at himself carefully in the mirror while he was bathing his arms and chest and his face. That seemed to be a kind of a salve on the special activities of his brain—his hyperawareness of the world and its things—as if these activities were in excess of one's requirements, as if they were disturbances. At this moment he came to an awareness of that change that had grown in him here. Then he saw that it was not true, that they were not in excess, that they did not represent unnecessary disturbances. At that moment he looked over at Bartholomew with a slow, purposeful, ghostly turn of his head that even he did not expect of himself, and Bartholomew's eyes met his directly.

Nine

Piers made his way down the staircase as if his life depended on it. He had taken to sleeping in the old room above, which leaked. But he liked it. It didn't bother any of the boys, and they might even have expected him to move upstairs at some point anyway. Evan was more animated these days and Jude kept a look on his face that bore no conceit but which told of a certain higher knowledge. Bartholomew seemed more relaxed than he had been in recent days passed. Piers approached the table with his usual recklessness while Evan chatted with Jude and Bartholomew, the latter two listening most of the time. Piers sat down and helped himself to bread and poured himself a cup of tea. He watched the others blindly and with the morning species of his ephemeral gratification. As he drank his tea he felt happy. He smiled as he remembered the dream he had had of the woman of his life, whom he flattered and praised, even as he sat awake at the table. Evan nudged his elbow at Jude and pointed at Piers. Evan was amused by Piers and knew in his heart that the group of them would be incomplete without him. Jude smiled at Evan, then turned to Piers who was gazing into the air, and said to him: "Piers, are you the Buddha?" Piers registered the question and smiled, but did not leave his heavenly place: "There was only one Buddha. Besides, I'm dreaming of a girl." All of the other three boys laughed. They all agreed that Piers would be coming back to earth and the world for many cycles to come. "I will come back as her husband," said Piers, still gazing, unchanged as the Buddha under his tree by the river. The boys laughed and contended with him that he might come back as a grasshopper. "What's the difference?" said Piers. "So she'll be a female grasshopper." Evan nearly broke the table with his fist and the other boys were completely cracked up. Bartholomew forgot

about the presence of his dead parents in the river and his history of wards and wardens and shopkeepers. Jude was not in his body during these moments, so he left to a realm that surpassed even his recently acquired higher knowledge. Evan had been in that realm since he noticed Piers' changing of residence to the upstairs.

Ten

Bartholomew went to bed late that night. Not thinking of anything particular he just decided to stay out on the veranda and listen to the night. Evan was on shift but he was sitting in the kitchen area drinking tea. Bartholomew could imagine him nibbling at his mildewed bread. Maybe he dipped them in the tea when no one was looking. He didn't care. He wanted to think. Not to think *per se*, but to feel. 'I wonder what it would be like if I were alone,' he said to himself. 'I couldn't be just anywhere, I would have to be somewhere thinkable. Imaginable.' He paused. '*A world.*' He stood up directly and walked down onto the grass, unusually nimble as he navigated the stairs in the dark, and walked on out into the night as if he were expecting something as definite as something might be in daylight, only he wasn't. He walked to the edge of the grounds where the high cliff-thick green bushes posed like professional guardsman. He sipped the air through his nostrils and peered deeply into the black-green of the dense and high bushes and strained his ears and any other senses he might have to detect activity on the other side where the street ran—any activity at all. He rummaged the bushes with his hands—he was brusque and sure. Then he turned directly around and walked back towards the veranda. Before stepping up to the stairs he stopped and stood still. His eyes turned towards the ground: the grass and the earth and the darkness were singular. His jaws were tight, though he would not allow the sides of his mouth to turn down. He wanted neither pity nor respect from the outside. Bartholomew was not stupid. He wanted nothing from the world that he knew the world would never give him. Evan was by now out on the veranda. He called in a hushed voice, "Bartholomew! Did you say something?" Bartholomew looked up. "No," he said. "I just coughed a little. I think I swallowed a bug." "Why don't you come on up," Evan said. He went up slowly.

Eleven

In the morning Evan appeared strange. Piers kept quiet as Evan poured his tea. Piers reached over to the corner where Evan's stash of mildewed bread was kept; he grabbed a small handful and silently set it in front of Evan. Evan dipped the

pieces in his tea and used his tongue against the top of his mouth to turn them to mush before he moved it down to his front teeth where he liked to mull on it. Jude woke up and raised himself from his mat. His long body extended itself up into the space of the room like a tall and misshapen tree deciding it would like to be properly rooted again, even if the decision was not born wholly of desire. Everyone could at that moment hear familiar-sounding footsteps coming up the stairs of the veranda. The boys were still for a moment and Bartholomew came in through the window. He looked over at the boys and the boys looked at him, and then returned to their activities: Evan sipping his tea, Jude shaking out his mat and getting up. Only Piers greeted Bartholomew. "Good morning Bartholomew!" he said. "Good morning Piers," replied Bartholomew as he stood for a moment before walking over towards the table and then behind it to put his things down. Evan was direct about it: "Where did you go?" "Nowhere," said Bartholomew. Piers winced but maintained a dissimulation and sense of subterfuge that he thought he had been learning over the months from Bartholomew. Even though he did not sense the absolute details, he did sense that his innocence was no longer sufficient. For what exactly he did not know, but he sensed it with a fervor and fear that he had never known before: It was pleasure and pain for him, knowing and not-knowing, and wanting more of both, like Faust. Only Bartholomew was no Mephistopheles. Evan did not know what to think and when he did not know what to think he never knew what to say. For Evan there was an absolute symbiosis between the ability to think about a situation and the ability to say something in response to it, however minor or small. This did not reflect an obsession with truth, nor even with facts per se. It was something divergent. "Sit down, Bartholomew," said Jude. This relieved Piers. He had started to feel sick. As Bartholomew sat down, Evan slowly pinched a tiny shard of his bread from the table and placed it between the upper and lower sets of his front teeth, skewing it to one side of them. Jude interjected: "It must be dewy out," he said. "It is," said Bartholomew: "There was a mist."

Twelve

There is a misconception about the dominant ape. He is not in control of the group. Contrary to received opinion he has always had to feed himself. Hubris is the gully of his life, and it is rife with adages that only work for others: It is unusually dry, but not always.

Evan felt like he was receding. For about twenty minutes he played catch with Piers. Then he threw the ball back to Piers and said, "I'm finished, Piers. Sorry." "It's okay," said Piers. He smiled over at Evan before he could walk away, jutting his jaw forward and his face up towards the sky, and said, "You know, I can play with that Monkey in the trees." Evan smiled and was grateful to Piers for the dispensation: "Oh yes, I remember. That was good." He seemed a little bit unsure about the last sentence, even shy, as if what he meant might not be understood for what it was, which was simply what it was: That he had thought

that it had been “good,” like anybody else. He scratched his head and walked up towards the veranda. Piers supposed that he was going to take a nap. Evan had resorted to naps recently in the afternoons. Piers believed that Evan was suffering painful headaches as he often saw him rolling his index and middle fingers into his temples. Evan was not stupid. Piers reflected on this. He thought that Evan must know more than he let on. He thought that Evan knew more about all of them than they knew about each other combined. Piers felt there was a burden on Evan. He mused and he must have mused quite deeply, for he thought to himself, “Nothing can go back that far.” He thought that the further away they got from the world of the dying—the awful streets and cages and shopkeepers—the nearer they were to. . . the start of things. Then he thought of Bartholomew’s visiting his dead parents at the river and returning in the nights: His mind clicked just then. His eyes went down and he dropped the ball onto the grass. ‘Nothing can go back that far.’

Thirteen

Jude walked out into the garden and around the ruin to go and look at Piers’ plot of earth. The weeds had begun to spring up among the basal plates that were being pushed up by them. He had wondered just how it was possible that Piers had simply abandoned the plot of earth and say nothing about it. Jude squatted next to the plot of cultivated but weeded earth and moved his head around looking at the plot. He felt a pull in him: He put his hands into the earth and moved them a little. He was surprised at what he found. What he was seeing with his own eyes now was that Piers had planted roots that were basal underground plate roots—bulbs and shallots—and that he had done it quietly and without telling anyone. It seemed strange. He pulled up about a dozen little light brown shallots and two whitish bulbs and held them in his hands, his arms outstretched over the small plot. He watched and wondered. He frowned and felt uncomfortable about the whole thing now. Had Piers done this to plan for something, or as a devious, or more benign clandestine act—only the very latter fit to Piers’ character in Jude’s mind. Perhaps he had just done it, and it was as simple as that. But why hadn’t he told anybody, since he had been bringing in other simple aboveground root vegetables for quite some time until he moved up to the room upstairs? And why had he not pulled them out yet, since they were getting overgrown for guttural purposes? Jude decided to leave them there. He put them back into the ground and covered them with the plodded earth. He pushed the plods down over the roots so that they would be sure to take hold in the earth.

Jude really did not understand any of this. He was and had been getting generally confused about things anyway, and for a time that seemed to be longer than just recently, when he reflected on it. He decided to talk to Bartholomew. Bartholomew had always listened to him and heard him out in full.

The next day he told Bartholomew the whole story. Bartholomew reflected on

this, standing straight up and with his head down. Jude waited. Bartholomew lifted his head a little bit, with his eyes still directed downward, and said, "Well, yes, I think there's something to it." He said this without passion but with the honest but straight breath of calibrated concern. He paused for a moment, and then said, "Let's let it alone for a while, and see." He paused again, and then said, "Put it out of your mind for a while, Jude. Go easy. I'll get back to you on it, don't worry. Just go easy on yourself and enjoy this old colonial ruin for a while." Jude took Bartholomew's words to heart and agreed to let it go at that for a while. The two of them continued to stroll through the garden together for quite a while, but only a few words were said, usually Bartholomew admiring and pointing out things that he found pleasant in the garden: bugs, leaves with nice patterns, old branches in the dirt, the two or three large rocks that the garden had. Jude felt calmed and felt a pleasantness from Bartholomew that he had not seen before. Bartholomew was always polite and quiet and somehow compassionate, but—then he thought that maybe it had not been such an unobvious feature all-throughout, that he, and maybe the others, had just not been keen enough to it. He didn't know exactly, but he noted not with trepidation exactly—since being in the social element at any time with Bartholomew was always straightforward—but with some other feeling—Bartholomew's words: "for a while."

Fourteen—Bartholomew's Dream

Bartholomew had a dream that night. Two men walked in an old city of mausoleums and Mosques and temples. The two men stood talking with one another, with their bodies aloof but close, like they were sharing a secret, or secrets. He noticed that behind them there was a camel fallen on its side and that

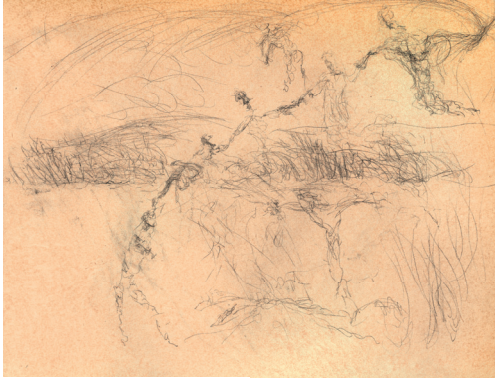


it was dead, the underside of the corpse open and red and blighted by several days of sun. They had hats on. Tall, foldable skull-caps. One of the men took his own off and brought it down before his chest, opening it up with its bottom up towards the sky. The man pushed his hand around in it and stirred it, while the other held his head down to it, only slightly slumped from his upright stance: He lifted his head a little so that his eyes rolled up to the man holding the skull-cap, and said, "Is that all of it?" "That's all of it," the man with the skullcap said. "Mm," the other man grunted. Bartholomew wondered why they

seemed so highly civilized to him? There was subterfuge happening, but it was the sense of etiquette that struck him, a sense of the normalization of violence, such that it did not even have to be sublimated to be kept in-anchor—or reformed to be tested or controlled or even understood—to remain in a security frame that would pose no risk to anyone: a certain religiosity of completely unspoken but forcibly evident respect. He could not define it any more than this. The man with his skull-cap in his hands folded it slightly and slipped it back onto his head. It was just deep enough to do it without taking out of the cap whatever it was that he had stirred and shown to the other man. They kept talking quietly in the same place with their straight-body aloofness, as if this was all the most normal of routines. Bartholomew thought, ‘This must be the way these people do things. It must be the way they are. It must be the way they go about everything.’ He paused in thought: ‘I wonder where I am.’ The camel suddenly stood up and the men turned to it and looked, and watched it beat a hasty departure. It was red-fleshed as it retreated or ran. The bland, anesthetic bleakness of it was repulsive to Bartholomew but at the same he sensed that it might also be that to others. Bartholomew turned his eyes to the two men: They were both pointing at the galloping camel and laughing, and they were as frozen-still and crystallized as limestone. This woke Bartholomew up. He blinked three or four times and exhaled the air of the sighs that he made with blunt and unconscious coarseness; the white ceiling of the ruin was above him and he watched it. The ruin in whole, in sum; he was alone with it there. There was no one else inside. He rolled over on his side and curled up and held his head with his arms, his legs fully off the mat. He simply cried. It was a very simple matter: He wanted his mother and he wanted his father. He wanted them not-killed. He wanted them not dead. He wanted them released from life and released from him. But it was divergent: Everything he wanted desperately to have been so had been destroyed, he only wanted the evil consequences destroyed also. Not only for him, but for his mother and his father, and his sisters. The last part of the thought caused a hiccup-breath in his sob. He wiped his eyes and rolled over and sat up, reaching his arms out over his knees and resting his head there. ‘It’s laundry now,’ he murmured. For the past three minutes he had not been alone in the ruin although he would never know it; he didn’t register anything except the hundred year old ceiling anyway. He fell back onto the mat and drifted immediately into sleep as Piers stroked his hair and Jude watched standing guard next to him. Evan came in through the window. His face looked worn, he sighted them completely. He stood staring, the terror in his face at a high-mark. Piers looked up without meeting their eyes, and said, “He’s suffering.” He paused: “But he’s not dreaming now.” Piers then looked directly up at Jude: “Jude, please go to my little plot of land at the side of the house. You’ll find bulbs and shallots just beneath the surface. Please bring me half of them, and put back or leave the other half.” Jude did not feign surprise or express knowledge; he could not: he was feeling nothing right now, he felt a blank weight on him. He left immediately to fulfill the task. “Evan, he will need water,” Piers said, looking over at him: “He has a high fever.” Evan was jolted out of his totalizing stupor and shook his head to listen again: “Water, Evan; he has a fever.” Evan moved directly to it.

Fifteen

The next morning Bartholomew was dead. The three of them were altogether silent. They held hands as they stood in front of his wrapped body, faces straight,



devoid of sternness. His face was clear of hate as it had always been. Later that night they took Bartholomew's body across the city and into its deep, ugly outskirts, where people lay moaning, and dogs there were true to their adages. Evan used the same formed wood pieces that Bartholomew had contrived and used to conceal the diminutive stature of his child's body. They crafted two more pairs before noon. With their robes they looked like old men. Moving

through the outskirts was difficult. It was like a war zone. The earth was exposed, an unending series of mounds that were more dirt than compound earth with its storeyed-roots. But they never once let Bartholomew's body touch the ground. They never leaned it, or supported it with anything but their own bodies. They held him onto the canoe ever so gently. His mother held her arms out to him, and entreated him. His father lost his resistance and died. Bartholomew sunk into the river, the water swirling noiselessly around his tiny, giant wake.

Chapter Two

ROOTS

One

The small mother, for she was petit, picked up the child in her hands and let it rest in her arms to suckle. Her husband had left to the city months ago but she was happy she had the company of her child. She called him, "Bartholomew." She was not sure what to think of the little creature at first, but she had grown used to it. After some weeks she had grown to love the child after a sort. (That cannot be explained; it is the mother-rule of the universe.)

The husband was gone for a long time. The boy, little Bartholomew, had grown; he was a little man—all of three years old. She said to him, "Little One, what will I say to your Father when he comes home to us?" She was a funny woman, but starkly sincere. "I've grown to be three years older also, Little One," she told him. He looked up at her with his eyes; they were a child's eyes: then he threw himself against her, wrapping his arms around her. "Mmm, Little One," she said. "Mmmm." Her eyes looked straight ahead of her, over him, her arms resting loosely against his shoulders. He pressed his face into the folds of her dress as hard as he could. He pressed even harder, trying to force his cheek, then his temple, then the side of his forehead into the blighted womb of solace. (That is the child-rule of the universe; it is a harder rule.) She continued to stare.

The days passed, the months, the years. His father didn't come home. One day a lot of men in green clothes came; they had long sticks with long knives on them, the kind, he thought, that his mother used to dig out the shallots and the other planted roots in their small garden, and then wild out on the steppe. The men continued walking; but at the end of the line, he saw one man slowly pulling off, it seemed to him; he had the instinctive sense that a uniformity was being jeopardized and that that man was the cause of it; his heart began to beat at the same time that the man pulled off completely as the others disappeared in-line; then the man ran over to the boy and stopped right in front of him. He was looking at the boy with the greatest intensity. The boy stood right there, he had not moved; his eyes were wide and he seemed to fade as he looked up and met the man's eyes; amazed with the truth, the man lifted the boy into his arms and

embraced him. The boy put his forehead on the man's shoulders and let himself be loved. He had ceased to fade.

Two

Over the two years that followed Bartholomew lived in constant fear not only of the existence of the men who had worn green clothes and carried sticks with knives at their ends; he was afraid they would come back and take his father away. He did not want to lose his father anymore; he had waited with and without hope for his father, not knowing what to expect from his mother's inability to understand or even to divine his need for a description of the man. That could appear to be over now in the eyes of others, but there were no others except the three of them. He wasn't unaware of this, he had had the thought many times; as the thought developed it seemed to him like all of this was a mere interlude, a temporary dispensation from something that could have nothing to do with the requirements of the men in green, whom he had begun to call soldiers, as the term itself required of him now.

One day he and his father were out on a walk, ostensibly to find patches of ground across the endless fields and the steppe where they could use their trowel to dig up wild turnips and networks of inter-generational basal roots; the latter was their particular joy, it was in the finding of them that the joy came, since they were rare but still existent, like the antique past that he carried in his imagination about how things must have been a hundred years ago, better things, but with the same parents. (He was able to revel in his imagination of the antique past on occasions, but when he saw the sad face on his father, when the man didn't think he was being watched, the whole thing shattered as he tried to put his father and his mother in that picture.)

They would only cut off small triangular volumes ('arrow-chunks,' as his father called them: he would say happily to Bartholomew: "How many arrow-chunks?" "Five!" Bartholomew yelled) of the energy-laden roots of the network; his father had a finesse with the trowel, and he, Bartholomew, was able to do it now too: he learned, you see. They made sure not to focus on just one area, it was common sense: it insured that the network would survive their temporary invasion.

On that day they held hands walking back, the sack of roots and turnips slung over his father's shoulder. Bartholomew had never been happier than on that day. He loved his father dearly the moment he saw him looking down into his eyes with that intensity and amazement; he felt compassion and fear for the man even before that, when the man he did not know or recognize, or even know that he might know, had fallen-away from the line of soldiers. He knew now, at this moment, holding hands with his father, that he never would be so happy again. He remembered that day for the rest of his life. Up until several years later when he at last felt at peace in an old colonial ruin, and someone was stroking his forehead and his hair, abating the serious consciousness of high fever.

Three—Of Lamas and Horses



Bartholomew woke the next morning with his mother sitting on the edge of his bed. She was not sitting full on the side of the bed with her whole buttocks, she was sitting very much on the edge with half of it. "Little One," she said. Then she said nothing. Bartholomew's chest salted up; his eyes became focused and squinted, and his front teeth were pressed hard against each other; his lips were drawn down sternly: his face

took on the mien of a very old man. He didn't say anything to his mother. He got out of his bed, slung his coat on over his pajama tops and walked out the front door. There was the morning sun. It cast light all across the steppe. He sat on the ground, on the very earth, with his arms around his knees. He was nine and he felt like would die.

One morning not long after this he picked up his rucksack with clothes and turnips in it; he left the shallots for his mother, for she was fond of them. That was why he left them: that way he knew that she would eat, at least for a while. She was thin, and she was not talking; she smiled sometimes, it even seemed that sometimes the smile was directed at him; but it was only a half-diminishment of the stare that had grown too old either way.

He crossed the steppe. He walked and survived on the light rains and their bulbous offspring in the ground; he ran into nomads. They took him along with them, it was proffered as a matter of the unthinking part of life, the given. He went along with them. One mother of two noticed his sadness, what had grown to be an evolving species of evasiveness, still unharmed to others and hesitant in his own shy heart, that had also been an anti-action that had been formed in the core of his destroyed heart. She held him one day, and asked him to come and meet her children; it was not in their habit—or even in their consciousness—to ask questions to somebody about himself or herself, or to ask questions about that person to others for that matter. So she invited him to come and meet her children. He agreed, meaning he nodded, and she took his hand and they walked to her tent. He came in through the efficient flap and the mother introduced them to him; he was introduced to them. "Come and play," said one of the boys.

Bartholomew went over and knelt down and looked at their wood and clay toys; they had horses, riders, lamas; they were able to put a rider on one of the horses, but the lama was a prouder animal they said. "The lama is so valiant, don't you think?" said the second boy, younger in body, but older in mind than the other one: or so it seemed. The bigger boy agreed and said, "That's what the old people tell us; our cousins, who are rich, think the horses are more valiant." "Hm." It was the first time Bartholomew had opened his mouth with respect to anything that was not of pure utility or instruction or guidance since he had been with the nomads. "Why do they think so?" Neither boy seemed to be able to answer, and the two of them looked at one another. "Because they're spoiled," said the bigger boy: "They wouldn't be able to tell the difference between a thin stick and a thick piece of straw." The bigger boy was immediate in this. He was able to draw an analogy to something he said before, under the pressure of necessary and interrogative contemplation. Bartholomew noticed that. 'People aren't as they seem,' he thought to himself. 'Why have I become so old?' he asked himself in the solitude of his mind. He looked over at the children to see that they were watching him intently. "Can I see one of the lamas?" he asked. The smaller boy handed one to him immediately. Bartholomew looked at it and fondled it in his hands, turning it and rubbing his fingers against the surfaces, juggling it ever so gently and slightly to indicate play, or at least that his curiosity and interest was strong enough to indicate a willingness, if not a desire, to play. Both boys handed him riders. "We'll leave the horses over here," said the bigger one: "That way we can play." Bartholomew played with the boys for several hours, and forgot himself.

Four—Hard Won Partings are Hard



The day came when the nomads needed to communicate to Bartholomew a truth: they would be moving deeper into the steppe, both north and east, so that tundra and deep woods would become their new presence and element; the distance was long, they told him, and there would be forests where they would eventually get to which would involve a year of collecting wood, mushrooms, and meats. He felt strange; he knew their dialect now, even though he spoke so little, and almost exclusively with the two boys with whom he now played on a regular basis. He was invited each day with a new invitation; it seemed to him to keep things fresh and happy, as if that was what the mother intended.

These things went through his mind as they were telling him the new truth. He knew he had a decision to make; this was the plateau, he realized, of their intellectual requirements: interrogatives given as statements, but with import. It was the essence of them, he thought; why they were so quietly peaceful, where peace was not a necessity or a concept either, yet valiance was honored. It was too attractive, he realized. They left him to be alone, but they had actually left because they had a set of next tasks, or actions, in mind.

The next day he went to the mother in the morning. He said, "The sun comes out every day. I think I'll go." He had said this with a breath in his chest. She nodded and held him. He actually held her too. He didn't want to let go of her; her plateau was the one he had grown up with whether by chance or necessity, it's just the way it was with him; that's why she had understood. For a few moments he wanted her to be his mother. "The mothers will bring you meat and good roots; don't worry, Little One." He smiled, it was a part thanks, but more of: 'I am thankful; thank you for me, for helping me to be me for a while; I was happy with you and your children.' During those moments, they were watching each other. She was calm, beyond matronly. He was soaking it all in, returning. He was mind not inert, he was active inside. "Remember me," she said. "It will help you: and it will help me too." She smiled. 'She is valiant,' he thought with utter amazement. He moved his lips in the awe of it; she walked away then. He thought the smile would never leave her, even if it did leave him. There was a warmth in it; but there was an equal darkness; an equality that he wished was not so uniform: tipped either way by the weights, he would have preferred the certainty of an imbalance to this wretched equality. And that's exactly what tipped the scales for him at that moment; he had a direction. Narrowing his eyes, with his teeth pushed against each other, he remembered her as he preferred to. Unmatronly, with solid understanding of the dark. She had meant it: 'and it will help me too.'

Five—The Dog and the Snowflower

The dog and the snowflower; two worlds. Same habitat. The secularism of the nomads, Bartholomew felt, maybe knew about both worlds, but didn't need to ask about either. If that was so, then neither did he until he saw the men in green. He felt a sense of irony. Then his place in the world became clear to him. He had crossed a bridge now; he would have to change to man, as some men at one time had once had to change to nomads.

When he saw the outskirts of the city—he didn't know it could possibly be the outskirts of any city; but it was deep in outskirts of it, the steppe abruptly ending yet blending into the endless sea of mounds and human firestorms that died instant deaths and were never seen except as mixed ash. A human head rose from a small indigo-plume of fire behind a mound, and ducked immediately in fright when it saw him. He had looked directly at it, to its eyes. He had shown no malice; just an innocent perception of the new and the raw, and his calm

brow showed that he had foreknowledge of this; the human head wouldn't have known any difference. He kept walking; he poked the ground with a stick he carried with him, felt his steps with it. He stopped and raised his head to the sky, pushing it back on the nape of his shoulders. The sky was grey, and the clouds were deep: it was heavy, like a permanent storm, static: an evil affront to the whole of human history. He wanted to move away. He wanted to get out of there. He kept walking, watching the ground more closely, more hurried now, and poking his stick twice at each step, balancing his crooked, uneven gait with inertia and then movement, one step at a time. Finally he came upon the lights; there were so few yet so many that the humming aureole of the strip of light that beatified the horizon was muted in comparison to the vast size of its coverage: the whole city, a slum of universal proportions, but as real as the ground under his feet.

As he came upon the gates of the city—an amorphous zone of curled barbed wire stretching into minute infinities of hazardous grey and warring orange—he felt relieved. He felt like he might rise. “I’ll rise,” he said out loud. All of the ghosts had gone back into their mounds, all of the human heads: “I’ll rise,” he said: “I’m Bartholomew.”

Six

The state has the war. The possession of the idea gives it possession of the reality, the reality the idea, the argument has made its rounds but it is still a viable one, it is not stale. Men's individual wars have died for a variety of reasons, and if they are still around they are merely tutored or placable or occasionally appropriated by a serious mind and rethreaded. But each man's private need for being cruel is very much alive and enhanced; if you can imagine the sun in a state of enervation and not die laughing, the world would like to know. Because these haters with their hates are the new guerillas, a whole monkey chain sweating the earth and her people.

There were tens of hundreds of tunnels dug and built to traverse underground the hundreds of thousands of mines and the half-mile of barbed wire and wooden contraptions of vampire-skewers.

Bartholomew was not alone; there were others, desperate, thin, frayed people; some maddened, some anemically stark. He watched them dip their whole bodies into the holes and disappear. Some pushed back after already in and caused a blockage and a reversal of all movement in that tunnel; where someone could not divert to a connected tunnel or a vertical dug-out in a side-wall, that person would be forced to go back out also. Then there were scenes of human chaos and flailing arms and then a single body mutilated in a spot which had been the epicenter of hell for several minutes, just one minute before.

Bartholomew walked over to a hole that had been busy before but was now quiet with just a few people having gone in. He dipped his whole body in; it was

total darkness, but he was surprised to find that he could walk fully upright. He believed that it had been made higher over time; he walked and walked. And walked. At one point he sat down, but the ground was too damp; as he finally came towards the light he stopped and looked up: a pure shaft of light to the cold and damp ground. He moved his head and his eyes down and along the pole-beam of the light-shaft: he saw the ground. He turned inside for a few moments: 'I am going,' he said quietly. He walked towards the light and made his way so that he had his hands on the ladder; he braced, looked back for a moment, then went.

Seven — Paphos Was Never Eden



A slum of universal proportions: that's what he saw. Only now it was close up. The rest he could deduce or remember.

He had taken a skull-cap that he had found on the ground in the tunnel; it was hardly damp at all. He thought: 'There is no harm in it. No one is coming back to get it. And I like it.' He wore it now, with a confidence that was intended to bait his fear. It beat his hair down, and made him feel less of a sinewy thread thrown into the world; more of a green, muscular, and firm branch, with feet to run on, with hands to use freely.

He walked through a dark alley way between two high,

dark, and grey buildings whose windows were boarded up from the inside; someone fell. They hit the ground. He looked up and there was a window with hanging and jagged pieces of cross-wood exposed: a shrew of a woman heckled the corpse from the hole and laughed out loud; her flailing arms sorted themselves every few seconds and pointed menacingly below towards the street. Bartholomew moved on. He grasped his head with his hands on his skull-cap, felt the roundness of the flax shaped by the hard roundness of his head-bone. He felt enthralled, and left quickly, promising himself not to forget his fear.

"Stop!" Bartholomew turned. He saw an old fishmonger at a stall. "Come here!" Bartholomew stood still, not moving, still watching the man with the same expression. "Fish! For you!" The old fishmonger held up his hands: "You see! Fish in my hands!" Bartholomew could see an oblong silver mass with blurred rivets that looked like they might be scales, in the darkened air, resting in the old fishmonger's held-up hands. The fishmonger's arms were too long: Bartholomew moved away quickly, "Stop!" yelled the old fishmonger. "I've got fish for you!" Bartholomew didn't turn around and didn't stop. "You little demon! I offered you food! I'll get you yet! You'll see!" Bartholomew's ears were pumping with the sound of the blood running through and churning below the soft, graced human skein of his temples; the word: "yet," registered immediately, Bartholomew was not stupid: the man's intention had not changed from one to another; it was the same now as it had been when he proffered his goods: 'a conceit,' Bartholomew rushed the words out as he ran, 'worse than a mere trap,' he said breathlessly, 'he called it 'food' not 'fish',' he mildly gasped with a small coughing of the words. 'I will not be stupid in this city,' he said. He slowed down now, safely away from the old fishmonger, safely away from territory that the old scab surely knew better than he did, surely had more interested parties in, he thought.

As he walked on he felt a certain permissiveness about the whole thing: 'What can I do here?' he asked himself. (Civilization is a tutored illusion. Paphos was never Eden, and Eden got bedizened by gardeners, goodmen and proconsuls.) Just as he finished the thought, two men with no hair, scrawny with bulky little necks and gleaming eyes, advanced on him slowly, step by step, their torsos pushed forward. "Come here, little one. I want to show you something," one of the scalawags said. Bartholomew stood still just for a moment this time, then ran, ran as fast as he could. The two scrawny bodies with their deformed bulks ran after him, knives clenched in their hands and pushed forward with their rotting arms. Bartholomew ducked into an open doorway in a dark, musty area, and pushed his back against a wall, stretching his head up high against the hard building's interior, trying to control the gasps of his noisy breathing. A hand came in rounding the corner of the open doorway, and grabbed at him, and held him loosely by his clothing; Bartholomew tried to run, but couldn't and bit the hand of the intruder; the scrawny dwarfed wrinkle of a human being jumped into the inner area and grabbed Bartholomew fully and slashed the knot-point of muscle on Bartholomew's upper right arm. He turned Bartholomew around and drew the knife across the back nape of his neck, then grabbed him by the non-existing collar of Bartholomew's shirt and dragged him away; Bartholomew hung-on listlessly, chastising himself without knowing what in the hell was going through his mind; the image of the nomad mother in the steppes said 'remember me, Bartholomew'; he fell unconscious and asleep as only a child can, the listlessness depleted and getting cradled by the old norm of a dream, and he wondered if his mother had eaten those shallots, which at one time had been her favorite.

Eight—The Colonel and the Gallows



The face of the colonel was pockmarked and blighted; Bartholomew watched him pass as he languished in a corner in a dark cell. The man looked conclusive and altogether within himself; Bartholomew said to himself: 'He's an exception.' He looked around: 'Where am I?' He saw a man who walked behind the

conclusive one; obsequious and fat and following like a puppy. Bartholomew could see that the mind of that man was morally inert and heinously dispersed in the starradicals of the universal slum. Bartholomew put his hand to his neck; he felt a cord there. He brought up his second hand and moved both of them around his neck and knew that it was tied around it. He pulled at it and it came right off. He put it on the dirt floor in front of him and stared at it; it was like a snake, but a stupid one, too stupid to know evil as a matter of performance, just knowledgeable enough to see its own pathetic nature: 'I'm a limp wand,' it must have thought to itself, a mechanism of self-pity. He threw it into another corner where he wouldn't have to look at it beseeching him for a forgiveness that it would never honor. He pushed at the dirt with his fingertips, for no particular reason but to pass the moment, and the pain was immediate: it was like the common term between all raw pain wrapped up for one moment in one boy's hand. "Ghhh," he said. "Auhahh." He wrapped the untouched hand around the touched hand and squeezed the bones of his fingers as hard as he could. He pressed both hands to the ground, very hard, laying the backs of them on the dirt, and he moved back and forth in a squatting position, digging his fore and rear knuckles and the skin in-between into that inanimate matter. The fingertips of his right hand had been scorched to depletion. The boy went to sleep again: it wasn't the surprise, it was the grief of losing the dexterous freedom in his fingers, an unrare given and human universal, which was the outline of his thought-cloud as he fainted—a whole part of his soul taken away from him then and there: it had been so easy for them. As he lay on his side the cuts in his clothes and the small clots of blood on his skin could be seen. He'd been cut many times; he had been knocked out completely with a blow to his face the night the two vigilante scabs had brought him to the ward for money. Then they had cut him; the warden welcomed each new child.

'I am Bartholomew.' He paused. 'I am Bartholomew. I will always be.' He was mumbling as the jailer shook him; the jailer was insisting that Bartholomew wake up. Bartholomew opened his eyes and peered dazedly up at the face standing tall and upright above the man who was shaking him. It was the pockmarked man, the conclusive and morally contained one in the green uniform. The man said to the jailer: "Stop shaking him, he's awake." The jailer stopped shaking

Bartholomew and stood up. Bartholomew had thought that the man shaking him had been a large man; Bartholomew saw that he was thin and had a young face, not a baby face, but a young, new face. The colonel's face was not new: it was a very old face; not because of the pockmarks but because of the seriousness of it, the total containment, morally hewn by distinct marks of frustration in his constant and unchanging expression. "Help him up," he said to the jailer. The young jailer put his long thin arms down and stretched the forearms of them beneath Bartholomew's armpits and lifted him; the young guard, the jailer, was strong, with arms like Jude's, gangly and overextended muscles that once put in action had great pull power. Jude was standing outside the cell, looking in and nodding to Bartholomew to get up and come, encouragement, and support, and understanding as empathy, for the age, and the situation, and the state, and the orphanhood, and the status, and another jailer held his arm. Bartholomew looked at Jude and watched him nod, and then got up completely and stood alert. The colonel looked back at the second guard who had possession of Jude and turned and said, "Let's go." The five of them walked down the dark aisles of what was clearly an underground compartment of cells, 'a network,' thought Bartholomew as they passed other cells and he looked sideways with his head turned at the dumb and blanketed small mounds that only vaguely suggested that living human beings were the source. They came to a high multi-plated metal doorway; the guard who held Bartholomew let him go as the colonel took hold of Bartholomew's arm without looking at him and without changing his expression or his thoughts or the status of his body; the guard went and opened the three racks and latches to open the high door: he pulled it open, and walked back to Bartholomew and took Bartholomew's arm. The colonel let go of him and walked in front of all of them and proceeded out the door; the others followed him, the young guards would not go until he was through.

When they had gone through all five of them stood there on what looked like a ramp to a stockyard, up on a stocklanding, a huge cement block.

Then two other boys came through another door just then, over across from them, as if the colonel had instigated a signal without anyone seeing it or even knowing about it. The two other boys were held by two other guards, also young; four young guards, and four young boys, and the colonel, the father. The colonel-father walked down the steps of the cement stocklanding and put his arm up without turning his head and made a forward motion with his raised arm for the others to follow. They followed. There was a truck, a green truck. A driver was waiting, he had his head out the window turned towards them. The colonel walked towards the back of the vehicle and opened the green tarpaulin flaps throwing them open. He walked back to the others. "Listen, you boys," he said. "You get into this truck. Stay in the truck, do not get out, do not jump out, wait. Wait until it stops, and then still don't get out. You get out when you hear five thumps on the wall separating you from the driver. Get out whether the truck's moving or not. Just get out. Then I want you to run. You've got food in there with rucksacks; water, other stuff. You'll see. Run south, towards the lights, and don't come back in the other direction, ever." The colonel's voice sullened, quieted, the constant broken: "There are some knives in there. They are switch activated. You'll see. I don't want any of you to fight. Stay together, until you are adults. You're stronger together, you're all the same age,

same strength, you're normal children; hide and stay alive together until you are adults." Bartholomew noticed the repeated phrase: 'until you are adults.' 'He's an exception,' Bartholomew thought: 'He's different.' Then the colonel said: "Go." (The guards had already let go of the four boys when the colonel first started to address the boys directly.) Jude looked up at the colonel as Piers pulled gently but firmly on Jude's arm, entreating him quietly but urgently to move, but Jude's mind was moving quickly and rationally, he wanted to see this man before he left and he would have to become a 'they'; Evan was already examining the back entrance to the truck; he turned his head to the other three, and said in a hushed and careful shout: "Let's go!" The colonel's eyes met Bartholomew's: Bartholomew was awestruck as he looked into this man's ghostly but human eyes, fully conscious of the need to move, and moving.

Chapter Three

THE UNIVERSAL SLUM

One—The Travelers



The boys found themselves huddled together in the back of the green truck. Evan motioned to them: "The thump from the driver. Five of them. Then we jump." The other boys nodded in the darkness; Evan was eased, and hung his head down again to absorb the constant impact of the truck on the road. Piers chatted quietly with Jude about the girls he had known when he was a child. Jude was only a little intrigued, but kept quiet: 'He must mean in another life,' he said to himself starkly, and felt himself to be stark, then looked at Piers. When he saw Piers, he became more mild with him in his mind, a little bit more tolerant. Then Piers started to talk about famous actresses: "beautiful actresses, with big boobies!" he declared. "Stop it now," said Jude, the severe annoyance of his mental comfort

asserting that it would tolerate no more: "or I'll kill you." Evan looked over at them and saw immediately the nature of the two persons and their personalities: "You, you are Piers, right?" "Yes," said Piers, with an amiable smile, eyes shining. "Don't talk about boobies while we're driving." Evan said it flatly and without cruelty, almost to humor but not to humor, and turned away. "I like boobies, especially those of movie actresses," said Piers: "But I won't talk about them when we're driving." There was mirth in Piers' voice, but it was peaceful and even as Jude stayed audibly silent, Evan saw that Piers was no threat to anyone because Piers did not perceive anyone to be a threat to him. Evan smiled, and left it at that.

As they drove the world outside became more light through the crack in the tarpaulin tied up loosely to the exit ramps of the truck. It was not morning light, it was the light of many electric lights, a universe of lights: dead, sullen, alcoholic light, a dogsbody light, with an infinite logarithm, casting the sky as a mere mold of that logarithm, a function of it, the earth bound by it and withdrawn from the possibility of a world. Bartholomew watched the light split beams in different directions through the crack, and noticed a change in the color, a richer hue: pink-orange; he could imagine a diminishing horizon, a menace approaching; reality's onslaught: light bourn by the universal slum as the moon might bear the light of an invisible sun but never in the daytime. He imagined the streets, the days, and the people; and the nights.

There came five thumps from the cabin. *Thump. Thump.* Then a pause, then came three more of them in sequence: they were thick, effective sounds. Evan was already standing at the flap covers of the tarpaulin peering through the crack; he looked back at the other three boys who were also standing now, and said, "Let's go!" He pulled open the flaps and jumped. He stood to one side of the truck and held one of the flaps back: each boy jumped through that hole.

When they were all on the ground, they all stood for a moment not looking at the surroundings, but at each other. The truck had already driven away, leaving dust in its fume tunnel, warping the grey air. Evan turned and put his arm down and looked in all directions, and then waved the arm forward as he started to run in a tactical and rhythmic skip. There were no words. It was understood. The others followed; Bartholomew was directly behind him, and Jude and Piers were right on the back of Bartholomew's heels. Evan's mind was blank, he just had a destination in mind; he was looking for one, stopping, halting his skip, then starting again; the others constant with him, coiling, stationary, and then springing to his motion, like they were one serpent rising and falling.

The city of lights was the southern core of the universal slum; the boys had been driven from the northern core; the colonel had been right, it was safer here, the number of buildings was less and they were not tall and the buildup of a commercial infrastructure was sparser. All of the boys recognized that, it did not take years of exposure to the slums to obtain that comparative knowing. But that did not explain the auroras of light, which settled like clouds on the blighted hills blocking off the possibility of a continuation of the southern core further south. The hills gave the impression of a permanent and circular succession of the often ephemerally passing time just after the sun has set. Bartholomew wondered: 'Will we ever have day here?' The boys were gathered now in an old building made of concrete, which looked like it had been built and never used, or used once and never again. Jude was gathering pieces of wood, chopping out small decks of it from the floorboards; the boys could hear the hitting of the floors two or three floors up, which must have been the maximum height. It was cold, and Jude had not asked for permission to abuse the building and not go somewhere outside to scavenge for wood nearby. All the boys were cold. Piers was running-in-place, jumping up and down with his arms folded inside his shirt across his chest. Evan said: "We need something to light it with." Bartholomew said that a fake kind of flint could be found in the copper wiring of electrical cords or infrastructural wiring. He said: "Let me check." Piers was the first to

notice: He said, "But you're hands. I don't mean to be rude." "I'll manage," said Evan: "Thank you for noticing, it's fine." (Bartholomew's fingertips had been torched his first night in the child ward prison, in the presence of the warden and the two scablike vigilantes who had caught him and brought him in for bond money.) Bartholomew sought the electrical box first, went after it with a kind of vengeance to ward off the cold, moving his arms up and down but focusing with his head peering forward and his eyes peeled. 'Here it is,' he said to himself: a mental verification, which was a habit he stuck consistently to. It was several rooms away, in the dark; he had passed through musty cobwebs and stepped over nails, which he picked up, and pieces of an unknown fiber which he would not touch. He carefully and painfully ripped a piece of wire from the box. His father had told him about this, they had given his father such duties with soldiers, as a soldier, and also as an amateur electrician, for there had been no others. Bartholomew took a nail from his pocket, and ran it across the pliable but hard red plastic lining of the wire ever so gently but with the force of pressure, and spliced it. He had only taken a wire that he thought the most likely candidate for being extraneous if any of them were, in the event that perhaps they could get the actual electricity working tomorrow or at another time if they stayed or came back. He walked back the same way he had taken, noticing the doors and the walls from before, and saw the other three boys piling up the wood in a structural manner. He walked over to them and said to Piers: "Piers, would you please hand me that alcohol in you shirt." Piers looked surprised only for a short second; he was already handing it to Bartholomew as Bartholomew was saying, "I need it for the fire; it works with copper, this copper here." Bartholomew held his hand up and displayed the copper as he took the tiny mini-chug of alcohol in to his other hand as Piers passed it to him: "I knew it would be useful," Piers said with an amazing sincerity that made Jude shoot his eyes in surprise at him: "I would not have thought of the connection," Piers said: "Let's use it sparsely for the future, like for tomorrow if we can't keep this burning." Jude grunted an "Mmm" in agreement. Evan motioned to Bartholomew just to get it done. Bartholomew kneeled down to the wood and did the work of a pure magician.

The boys slept well that night, even if they had no mats except their clothes and some boards to keep the cold of cement off of them; it was their first night they had slept outside of the ward and its dirty cells for some time, longer for some of them than for others. Nobody asked Piers where he got the small mini-chug of alcohol; they all saw immediately that he was that type, to get things, and to keep them about; they knew they needed this.

Two — Sipping Turkish Coffee

Well that must be a sign; one morning they woke to Turkish coffee. Piers had prepared it, it was waiting on the makeshift table that for them was their table, the temporariness of it not evading them, but they selectively evading that feature as they chose to do. Piers smiled as each of them got up, like clockwork

with one another. They filed in diverging formations to the table and looked down at the coffee; Evan sniffed with delight, "mmmm," he mumbled. Evan was smiling. Jude had his hands on his waist, he bent over and closed his eyes, while Bartholomew was curious, it seemed to differ from the hot black liquid that the nomads of the steppe—with whom he had lived—drank in the morning, and in the evening sometimes (their routines had seemed to rotate, he thought to himself just now). Piers was watching Bartholomew as the others had already sat down to mix the delicious muddy soot and grind sitting on the bottom of their neatly shallow cups: mixing slowly and gently but with the firm confidence that goes with mixing Turkish coffee in Arabia and Persia and elsewhere, without the outward exhibition of unnecessary relish but with respect for them themselves; a more sophisticated casualness than it would otherwise have been. "Have you had coffee before?" Piers asked Bartholomew, smiling at him. Bartholomew thought: Is there is anything that this boy does not divine, or notice, or is it the nature of both because he is simply a naïve creature; 'no,' he thought, 'he is not naïve: he's unique.' Bartholomew gave his only rapid and wild smile in his whole life, and sat down as if nothing mattered, and stirred his Turkish coffee and then sipped, not waiting for the others. He had no need of relish today, he had lost that general ability in any case: rather it was a happiness for him, rapid and fueled by years of self-imposed enclosure which still lacked the quiet and sure frustration of moral containment. In that, he was still not there yet; looking up at Piers, whose expression was unchanged and whose arms were folded across his chest as he stood where and how he had stood just before these particular moments and two minutes ago, he thought about the colonel; then about the nomad mother who had invited him each day to play with her children as a sign of understanding and care: then about his own mother's distant stare, inner-stare outer-stare; looking up at Piers and sipping his Turkish coffee, with Piers returning the wide and calm gaze, Bartholomew was getting furrowed inside with a hewn mien to his mind. From that day on it was reflected in the balance of his brow and his whole mien, gait, and expression. Piers turned and went to take care of something, Bartholomew did not know what. Just then Evan said to Jude: "You know how you turn your cup upside down and place it on the saucer?" "No," said Jude. "They do it in Arabia and Persia," said Evan: "You turn your cup with the mud in it and place it on its brim upside down." "And then what," said Jude, his curiosity sparked, not yet wanting to put it fully on exhibit. "You let it settle," said Evan. Taking a last sip on his cup he turned it on its rim and placed it on his saucer (each boy had one, they knew it would have been pointless to ask Piers where he got all of this). "Half a minute," Evan said. Evan paused, then said: "Now. You see? The patterns there? Like waves and little lines of silk or flax combined but unique. . . see?" Jude nodded, bending his head down close to the settled and geological mud. He was suddenly very interested: "They wear Turbans, right?" not taking his eyes off the saucer. "That's Hindus; the Muslim men in Arabia and parts of Persia wear Thobes with headscarfs, like long dresses; women wear something like it but as a more tent-like kind of dress that goes to the ground, some with veils and some with scarves and some with both but never with neither." Jude's curiosity was getting drained. "What about the patterns?" he asked. "They tell the future with them," Evan said, caught up with the fervor of his explanations. "They sit playing a game called dominoes at

little indoor and outdoor cafes drinking and telling each others' fortunes." Evan paused, thinking, and said, "They do it everywhere when they have pauses, at school, work, at home, at the sea, everywhere." "How do you know all of this?" asked Jude, his occasional and always timely instinct for precision taking over completely, genuinely intrigued now, more with the sources of the information than with the information itself. "My father was a scholar," said Evan. Evan stopped talking. Jude slowed down, and then said with his breath, "Ahh."

Piers walked back in from wherever he had been, like a cook or a treasure hunter or a geologist in the field, in his every element and enthralled with it; he said to the two boys who were present, Bartholomew and Jude, "What are we going to do today?" —he asked. 'He's always smiling,' thought Jude, only partly perturbed, and without malice; and then, all of a sudden, he frowned and dropped his eyes for a moment and felt with a critical compunction about his own incessant judgment of his own faults that he was getting to the point where he could accept that other people were unique also. But Evan had disappeared in the meantime. "What do you say?" said Piers, who had known nothing about the disappearance as he had been away scavenging or gallivanting. "We should find Evan," said Bartholomew flatly, not rude, with an import that flooded the atmosphere and that Jude had already been suffering from for several minutes. But Piers was not stupid so he looked around at them inquiring with his eyes, when Jude said, "Let's go look for him then," having gathered himself together. He got up and walked briskly towards the exit door; the others followed and then they were all out.

The room was silence inside; there were no boys there, the saucers and cups and the black seas of the coffee-mud on the saucers lay quiet; the black seas of the coffee were suddenly blue, and little winds came over them, with little clouds and their own little atmospheres; then the winds of the clouds began to mix and move and stream to the winds and clouds of the others, and a hard storm broke Gautier's dead vortices into the seven flooded deltas of a very bloody Nile.

Piers could be heard singing very softly. He had tried to do it with the most sensitive sort of caution and forbearance that one can manage when trying to cheer someone up with a song. But Bartholomew was mute to it, not angered, simply mute to it as he supported a huge quantity of Evan's weight; so Jude whispered to Piers, "Shut up." They all three held Evan, Piers walking from behind and keeping the open palms of his hands on the upper back of Evan to balance him as he swayed between the tight arms and the wrestling bodies of Bartholomew and Jude, or fell forward as if in a lurch. A vigilante had knifed Evan when he had begun to flee from the old scab's long grasping, clawing arms; the old scab had been able to reach out just at the last moment and pull his knife across Evan's middle back. It had happened just as Evan successfully wrestled himself from the vigilante's grip and took the first steps towards a run, the first steps out of pariah-infancy and into the lingua franca of the southern core of the cosmic slum; it seemed very uncosmic now, like a dread-horse, dark, whinnying, aloof, as mysteriously evil as a sickle bent-in falling into a black hole.

Three—The Butterfly Patch

The simians, the wretched monkey-chains that sweat the earth and her people, is rejected; the older and coarser and more implacable paradise has been laid to waste also. One bad, a short good, a second bad. We've been full of false positives since then. We used to live in such a beautifully marked continuum, with all of its hazards and unnecessary wreckage and bads, and then comes this perfect abomination of everything that ever was. War, which is premature death, now lives off of it; it is the new flight to the bush-mind, the machete-mind, the jungle-mind. We are not stupid. Whatever our parents were, we are not stupid.

Evan woke up in the morning; yes, he was scathed and cut, cut rather deep; the blood-white of his cartilage was exposed only, smooth, airy, global. Both Piers and Jude attended to him throughout the night. They cleaned the wound, disinfected it with Piers' pure alcohol; Piers applied a butterfly patch to it, he used real glue, but it was white glue, not chemical and he used only a little of it; the rest of the pressure on the butterfly came from two holes pressed into the sides of the flaxen bandage itself, with thick threaded thread pulled through the eyes of the two holes on either side of it and attached to a binding of wrapped and coiled up shirt taken around Evan's middle back, ribs, and then upper abdomen like a tourniquet that had a preference for benefaction and not the quietly violent dead ringer of a boa constrictor. They knew it couldn't have been stitched with the cartilages there to sew over but not into: there was no skin or flesh buffer. Bartholomew made this perfectly clear to them, almost violently so in his voice, when Piers and Jude started to discuss how to close the wound and brought that option to the table. "Put a butterfly on it," he said. It did not take Piers too long to scavenge outdoors and come alight on an original and clean and even wrapped and sanitized piece of bandage; Jude felt good about it because it had the right smell, mainly after it was opened, but even before when he had put it to his nose the paper wrapping itself was of a special medical order that his nose was keen to; his eyes rolled in satisfaction, his instincts in an equilibrium of surfeit. "I will open it now," he said, as Piers finished preparing the wound; Jude was prepared to wait, but was anxious to see the controlled surfeit of the dazzled sensation in his nostrils and now his eyes be put to applicable use. Bartholomew had watched the whole night, watched the two of them like a chief surgeon, worried, but aware; then he knew it was time and he moved now to sit with the two others and took the butterfly from Piers' hands, a foregone conclusion that had been waited on and waited for. He was so gentle and manicate with his rubbished-fingertips, calibrating just the right pressure to assert on the labia of the butterfly, the skin folding in slow but with increasingly warped ravines and protruding skin-clefts on the local surroundings of Evan's back. And then he removed his hands and the deed was done. Jude had his first experience of the white glue, as his groin had become caught up in the anxious sensations of the original and more sensory ones. Each boy had accomplished a dead ringer of what adults would have gotten done in a shorter period of time, with real equipment, but with a great deal of dementia and unconsciousness otherwise.

Four — They're Only Reflecting on History Anyway

Evan had been on the rebound for over a week now; he ran and exercised his back; he talked a lot, saying little, which was observed by the others. Jude was especially deferential to him, jogging with him around the building to make sure that Evan kept safe, holding his feet down when Evan did sit-ups, and telling to him “wait a minute for it,” when Evan had to stop in the middle of a sit-up because of pain. “But what is it!” Evan would challenge Jude, pretending he wasn’t aware of any pain and that the expression on his face represented normal, healthy fatigue. Jude would say nothing, then Evan would continue and pull his trunk the rest of the way up, dip his head as if in his own Evan-like secular prayer to himself and his own selfish gods (whom only he could know), and run his elbows into the foreclips of his knee-caps like the world depended on it. “That’s thirty!” Evan said. “That was twenty-five,” said Jude, no longer willing to submit—as he never had been in his life—to stupid dispensations (which they all were) to others, just because of *x* or *y*. “Twenty-five,” Jude repeated. Evan said nothing and got up and went jogging out the exit to make a circle around the building; Jude, sullen and ashamed of himself for the extension of the dispensation, dragged himself up and jogged out of the exit following Evan, who was now out of sight. “You’re out of shape!” yelled Piers. As Jude could be heard from around the corner of the exit yelling “Shut up Piers!”—Bartholomew was also heard: “Leave him be, Piers,” he almost begged, feeling his own weakness in the face of this strange dynamic between Piers and Jude that he could not get a hold on yet, and which frustrated him. Piers said: “I was only telling him the truth, Bartholomew; just look at him huffing and puffing,” and before Bartholomew could say anything (which he had no intention of doing) Piers walked away into one of his infinite number of corridors or halls or hiding places or scavengery sources or storage areas in the building and everywhere within a mile of his presence at any one time, Bartholomew thought with dread. “Impossible nut to crack,” Bartholomew whispered-spat to himself in a direct and frustrated challenge to his own self-required ability to understand things and understand them quickly.

In the end it would take Bartholomew a good deal longer to understand that strange boy, Piers. He was afraid—his ego had to adjust to the thought—that Jude had been quicker to understand Piers. He was a little disappointed in himself for succumbing to this indulgence to himself and not to others, and willed himself back to the ethical coin of his intrinsic fairness, which he was afraid had been blighted (he was wrong about that), but then thought for a minute, and said to himself: ‘Evan? No, he doesn’t need to understand things, *per se*. He just wants the facts.’ He paused. ‘Jude lives for immediate discernment of *a* from *b*. That’s his only real requirement. Fifty-fifty chance, and never a major risk, best thing for survival.’ He paused. ‘He probably knows that too. And the accuracy gets better with time and practice, what’s the split now then?’ He shut off the thought immediately and dismissed his speculations as mere mental sojourns, which had never been his way.

A and *B*. *X* or *Y*. Or otherwise! Sojourns. Maybe for adults; not, for the morally complicated; not, for the shy and inhibited; not, for the children, for they have

something better: Fantasy! Fairy dreams! Love of ferment and ardor, the cradle of mutation and pain, and joy. Yes, well. It was too early for the boys. You know, in the end, only two of them would get it, would make the return journey. Perhaps people don't understand how important that is for a boy whose groin is simply turning into something new and revelatory. So then, let those people fail that test to understand: They are responsible for declaring themselves outsiders to these real fantasy lives and realities, the good, the best realities; let them declare themselves both commissioners and architects. Yes, but as well then: Let the dead bury their own dead. And let the boys and the children dream, let the shy ones heal and drip white water on their beds, let the morally complicated be morally complicated. They're only reflecting on history anyway.

Five—The Recoveree State

Evan was up; he cured, in mind and soul; he was better than before, bionic. "I want us to find a way to get out of this hole and live somewhere real, somewhere fantastically nice." He paused: "I want to rewrite my father's books there." No one said anything. They just looked at him and they just watched him, not knowing what was going on or what to expect. "We'll have to move north. Northwest into the western part of the northern core." Piers gulped then spat it out: "The colonel said never to go north again—" Evan cut him off: "No, that's not true, Piers. He said never to 'return' in the direction from which we had come." "Aha," Piers said, not quite sure of the difference; but as he was not stupid, he got the drift, and it was clear in his mind what Evan was thinking. Bartholomew was watching Evan carefully; he wasn't nervous, but he was concerned and concentrated on Evan's words very carefully. Evan was still in a state of the enthusiasm of the recoveree, he thought; he thought it would wear off, but wasn't purely dismissive of what Evan was talking about either, by no means: he also longed for peace and a place to find it. Jude, however, felt the potential for an overreaching of things, of things possible and impossible. He did not know what was going on with Evan further than that, but the feeling of possible overreaching was real in him. He wanted to speak alone with Bartholomew, whom he respected with such things; but there was no place to go and Evan was speaking. As for Piers, perhaps everyone thought that Piers' initial reactions showed total incomprehension, naivety, even stupid pluck: they were wrong if they did. Piers was more 'educated' than any of them knew, or more influenced by a certain benign power derived from an early exposure to what people often refer to as 'higher knowledge'; his father had not been a professional scholar, he had been a lawyer who had been smart and successful in his time, a time which overlapped with Piers' time with him before the fall of the family; there had been a great love he had for his father; and from the love that he had absorbed from the man's heart, he had also—as only a child or young enthusiastic students can—taken in many of the references and the whole of the general atmosphere of his father's knowledge and experience in

matters since his father had held those things in his heart as much as he had in his mind, in the vein of a hesychast, perhaps. So Piers had become very, very quiet, totally lost in his thoughts, beyond mere ruminations: 'He's in the state of the 'recoveree',' he thought suddenly; 'it's psycho-legal with him now.' He said it with certainty. 'It's as Papa said, he said it about the new state. A 'recoveree' state. He had said, 'there are many layers left from imperialism, Piers.' Piers remembered that his father had said it with resignation. He stopped for a breath, not so much in wonder as in a valid state of stupefaction. 'What's he trying to pull off?' Piers asked himself. (Perhaps it's clear why Piers' parents, especially Evan's maybe, had been eliminated so fast and efficiently, just after they had sent little precocious Evan to the care of his father's sister in the far, far countryside where the revolution had not come to, could not come to, since there was nothing to revolutionize there except the un-respected and un-regarded and disparaged people of the giant pre-steppe zones.) Piers looked over at Bartholomew, and their eyes met. Bartholomew had grown like a dark man as he had watched Piers thinking. Piers kept the gaze for a moment, then, uncharacteristically, dropped his eyes and his head. Bartholomew said to himself, like an old man, brittle and bitter, contemptuous and mean: 'Piers does not need to be right.' Jude was beside himself and had left the building; he had waited for Evan to stop talking and for the gazes to stop but it had taken too long. Evan was now at a makeshift table with a map. Piers had already regretted scavenging it for him. He took a deep breath, and did something of a kind he would never do again: "The maps are old, outdated, they aren't reliable, Evan," he said. Evan turned his head slowly, as if in hypnosis, back towards Piers. The look was dark and diabolical. Evan turned his head back to the maps and did not say anything. Piers looked at Bartholomew again, as if Bartholomew might be a medical dispensary for his fever. Bartholomew gestured with his forefinger for Piers to come with him. Bartholomew walked outside; Piers waited for a moment bearing on caution's side fanatically, then walked out also. He saw Bartholomew waiting for him around the corner, leaning languidly against the white-lightgrey cement wall. (There were many of them.) He was smoking. "I found it," he said. "Down there," he pointed. "Old factory there." "I know," said Piers. "I've been in there too." Bartholomew took an uneasy breath on the cigarette and threw it away: "He might be right," he said. "It might be time to go." Piers said nothing; there was nothing in his body language that said he didn't agree. There was nothing about him at all.

Six — Shibboleths

They had left two weeks ago. They had hiked through it all, all of the back of the slum, in the arse of the slum, like little guerillas, door to door, building to building, bramble-bush to bramble-bush—now two weeks later intermittent mini-steppes, massive fields in their own right, the stretch of a normal city of 100,000; hundreds of heads, but not thousands of citizens, no real population.

Those island-fields were a large spread and mounded and flat muddy sewage-dump mediterranean for the outlet deltas of the affronting mangle of the universal slum: from the north core to the south core and every longitude in between, from the pop-up human heads dying perpetually (indigo plumes from behind the giant mounds) to the dying and frayed and maddened, who were no threat to the boys—they wouldn't know what a 'citizen' meant so how could they know what a vigilante was? Evan led; Bartholomew, again, like a chief surgeon, was right on his tail, frowning and furrowed and complicated, reviewing history from the beginning, reviewing Evan's rewriting of his father's bookshelf—both boys, each with a different purpose—with each step. The sewage mud would have been quicksand if the suck were any deeper. Snow started to fall after the first two weeks; they shivered and huddled together: Jude lost all inhibitions, and his instincts were set free to roam wildly: "The more skewed the color spectrum from the sewage gasses in the waters, the shallower the water. The mud will be the same at the bottom though." He said it as if it was meant only to be said, as he huddled with Piers, freezing to death. "It will freeze. The other way, it won't freeze." He paused. Piers was holding him and rocking him, freezing to death himself and his teeth clicking. "At least that," Jude said as he was rocked. "What?" said Piers. "It won't freeze; the less harmonic the color spectrum on the surface of the dang shit-water the more likely it is to freeze—that's where we walk." "You mean that's where we should walk?" said Evan, more of an assertion he wanted verified. "If you like," said Jude. Bartholomew stood up and left Evan to shiver alone. He walked forward and forward and then he didn't stop walking. The boys lifted up their heads and saw that he was wrong to do so. "Bartholomew!" screamed Evan (he never screamed), it was not a yell, it was the screech of a man (a boy) suddenly terrified at being alone, of being without Bartholomew, of losing him to the evil. Bartholomew turned from the distance his trunk and his head and looked back at them. Evan was staring with wild eyes at him. Heads started to pop up behind Bartholomew, Medusa heads, some without gender, all bearing their teeth and whining. Evan was frozen and totalized; he couldn't move. Piers took over: "Bartholomew! Get back!" There was a pause of a split-second: "Come back now!" Bartholomew looked confused and bewildered and turned his lower body around to meet the direction of his trunk and head and then walked back. The heads went down. "Jesus Buddha," sighed Piers. Piers was almost out of his ability now and he knew it. Evan wasn't moving, Jude had started to troll and crawl across the earth: he was talking to the ground, kneeled to it on his hands: "Shibboleth," he said with great speed, and in repetition: "shibboleth- shibboleth- shibboleth- shibboleth—" Piers kicked him hard in the ribs so that it would hurt so that he would be taken out of his craziness. But Piers knew Jude was trolling, using the ritual injunction, and that he was being trolled also, rooting out outsider ground and getting messages that he was getting rooted out from it: "He doesn't know whether he's an Ephraimite or a Gileadite. He's playing both sides." (Jude fell in mind into a terrible wonderment, an icy forethought or omen, then he broke-off, shaking his head out of it, cursing himself.) From the kick Jude fell to the side and hit the ground on his side and started to moan. Piers let immediately off of that and looked up at Bartholomew, who was now standing right in front of him: "I'm sorry." There was a pause: "I thought I saw a river. Sorry," Bartholomew said. Piers shook

his head violently, chin down, then looked back up at Bartholomew and didn't say anything for a moment. Jude stood up now, and said to Piers, "I'm sorry too." Piers looked over at him and said nothing. Piers was agape but was aware: 'It's my turn,' he murmured to himself. They all helped him to stand up, except Evan, who was still on his knees and did not look like he had thawed. "Evan!" it was a command. Jude gave it. Evan took it, looked at them. He got up. He stood up and stood there for a moment. He animated himself and shook his head, took an audible breath, and said, "I'm sorry, ahii—froze up. Sorry," he said. His voice ended in a downward lilt. He turned and walked away, head down. "Let's get out of here," he said as he walked. Evan was back.

Seven — The Five Thousand Year Old Sun

'Five thousand years of jurisprudence and now this.' That's what went through Piers' growing mind the next morning, expanding on his age; he rolled himself up like a spun-out yo-yo and looked around him. Jude was to his side, still sleeping. 'He looks like a child,' thought Piers. He turned his head back and forth and said: 'We are.' Bartholomew was already up, Evan still asleep to his side. Bartholomew had been watching Piers: "Good morning, Piers," he said. "Good morning, Bartholomew," said Piers. Piers tried to smile. He hardly managed. Bartholomew tried to shore himself up, wrapping his arms around his body and sitting up straight with his chest out and looking into the sunrise and breathing out. He hardly managed. "Let's get them up," he said. Piers turned his head down to the side and said in a low voice, "Jude, we have to get up. We have to go." Bartholomew just kicked Evan softly but did not want to speak. He felt deaf to himself and so he felt deaf to the world. The both of them, Evan and Jude, started to get up, both stretching and yawning. They were like butterflies trying to escape from mildew.

The landscape was clear: the fields were green. The sunrise felt less menacing than usual. Evan looked about. "It looks like the rules have changed," he said with a confidence that he hardly managed. "New topography, boys. Greener, solid, better." He hardly managed. He was on tiptoes and bouncing up and down and trying to stare just below the sunrise on the horizon, at the bland curves in the mountain there. He took his attention away from the boys without noticing a thing for a moment. 'That's the same shit, I don't want to look at that again,' he muttered in near-silence to himself: 'I want a new sun.' Despite everything. Jude was walking about with his head down; he was examining the ground; he bent down and pushed at it with his fingers, then with his palm stretched down to the ground, then with the other palm pressed on top of the other. He pushed. "It's solid," he said: "It's part soil too." "We are all hungry," said Bartholomew. He said this in the sense that they had not eaten, that they could fade if they didn't fill their stomachs. He said, "Let's move, we'll hit the early tundra and there'll be wild basal networks, I know the area, or a region not far from it, it will be the same." Nobody asked any questions, they started walking, gangly and frayed now, in dispute with themselves and trying to hold on to one another without having any idea whatsoever at present of the meaning of existence. The

others didn't know that Bartholomew was in pain. His torched rubbish fingers were burning; he was exasperated with it, but he kept it in suppression from anyone else. The pain was physical and the pain was fear: he did not want further deterioration. He begged for no further deterioration.

Eight—A Natural State



If reasons were exempt from reasoning, how would we go on? Wouldn't we just settle into the ground? Within a week more the boys were settled in the early tundra, which was more like an alpine grass land spersed with low-growth virgin pine stands and stunted aspen: moose, elk; lichen, high ground growth roots and basal shoots, coupled and networking. "It's the shallow area allowed for the soil," Jude said: "They're forced to grow nearer to the surface. And they can't take nutrients and energy from the ground, there isn't any." "They'll taste fine," Evan said, "just as long as they're here, I'm happy." Piers was boiling lichen in a small pot on a fire to take out the bitterness. They had taken them from the areas where they had seen the small moose

herds scavenge the ground. "They can give us deposits of calcium-carbonate. It will be a good antacid for our stomachs. We should take a large quantity with us when we leave." That had been Jude again. Piers poked his head up from the cooking pot and said with cheery conviction, as though to assure him: "We will." Bartholomew had said nothing about the intergenerational root networks he had talked about, and he had said nothing at all recently. He sat on a rock each day out on a point across a frosty alpine field, like an owner, a justifier. He peered into the distance a whole day until Piers went over to him and told him to come back. "The western edge of the north core is not far," Bartholomew said without turning his head or moving his body: "You can see the lights at night in the east." He spoke these words to Piers, but Evan broke in and said: "The latitude is perfect. We move direct east, and we're in." "You think so?" said Bartholomew. Evan looked at him. Interrogative, suspicious, wondering what in the hell Bartholomew was talking about. "What do you mean?" Evan said

suddenly, like an interjection to all thoughts that might be going on right now amongst them or between them. "How did you come in?" Bartholomew asked. "What do you mean?" said Evan. "The northern core is what I mean, Evan. How did you come in?" It was as if Evan had been struck. "It doesn't matter," he said, sullen, jaws tightened, his head up, nose down, lips pursed. Bartholomew smiled for the first time in weeks. "I know it doesn't, Evan. Go easy. We'll go in. I just wanted to know if you knew. Now I know." Evan put his head straight and walked slowly away beaten by himself not by another; vindication had never been necessary. But what was actually going through his mind we'll never know, it wasn't detectable. But the moment was important. Piers looked at Bartholomew approvingly. Even Jude's scientific inquisitions with the earth and its elements had been challenged by the conversation. Jude ran his tongue across his upper teeth invisibly, mouth shut, then turned to go back to the soil and the natural elements he seemed to be taking refuge in. "I'm collecting hearty sections of the intergenerational roots that Bartholomew talked about before," Piers said to Jude, who was examining the ground. "He showed me where to find them," said Piers. Piers paused, Jude was not listening, or he was but he could not bear it, or did not want to so he didn't; it was not clear, but Piers knew that the science was taking over in Jude's mind to a greater degree than not, and that the practicality of the knowledge was no longer of any importance to him. Piers said: "Jude!" it was a command without a proposition, just total import that the two of them would and could understand immediately. Jude looked up surprised, and said with a suddenly broken brow, "What? I'm sorry?" he said. Piers softened his voice again and said to him, "Take these network-roots and cut them in a way that they're best edible." Piers handed them down to Jude who immediately put his hand up into the air and took them and went away to cut them as if he was automated. Piers was hoping the practicality of the task, given as a surprise and unsuspected command with import, would take Jude's mind away from the totalizing effects of the science. Jude was no good to them in this state of mind, and he was certainly no good to himself to be in this state of mind at all, at any time. There weren't any laboratories available, only harsh and brutal reality. This was dangerous, and Piers was the only one who noticed it, or the only one who cared enough but also saw the future well enough. He could also have made some verbal or even mental comments on the conversation between Evan and Bartholomew, but he had chosen not to: it wouldn't have been even expedient; it was pointless.

The next day they pulled out. East, to the north western core of the universal slum. As they moved the alpine tundra turned into old valley deltas one million years old; slumps in the earth where water gathered in shallow pools; water fowl; land creatures—tiny, minx-like cats; miniature, beaver-like rodents; the slumps alternating with low mounds of earth that carried on for a long time like the long, rounded and smooth stomach of a pregnant woman—as though she might have fallen from the sky to give birth as a punishment for her inability to forebear or by the violent desires of an arrogant god: put there so that she might defy him and spite him by balking at the visibly Trojan phalanx of the human populations; or as a gift, where she might take the dust of the earth to her womb and resurrect the little life that may have been left in the world, on a denuded and scrapped earth.

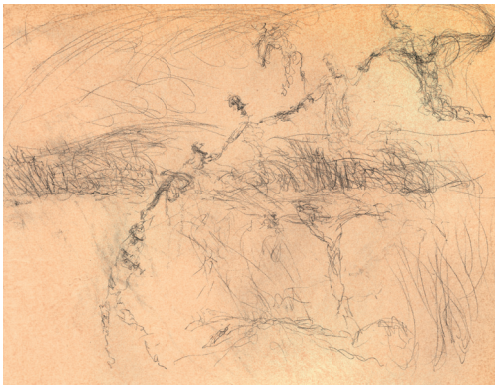
Perhaps she would have to wait a thousand years for the hyenas to jump inside of her: a terrible gift. Piers liked to play with the little minxes and beavers, he had started by offering them some chunks of basal plates which had a special smell of clay because of what had been their proximity to the freeze-sediment (the genius of place was the genius of smell for the little animals). Evan scolded him as he saw him doing it, and Jude balked at the whole thing. Piers smiled and saw that these two individuals were now fully back to normal. Nonetheless, he continued to play with the creatures throughout the journey, Evan no longer looking at him and Jude watching him suspiciously. The little animals would jump up and bounce off of Piers' legs and lower body as Piers pretended to the creatures that he might grab one of them when they jumped, but then playfully pushing them away in mid-air then watching them land like rubber bands on the ground just to shoot up again at him. At a certain point he started to make calling noises to them as they hovered around him in the very motion of the journey (it seemed that they were courting his play more than he was courting theirs, like he was the happy receiver: Jude silently balked and cursed the stupidity of it), clicking his tongue: "Ttss, ttss, ttss, ttss," four fast eighth-notes. This was too much for Jude: "Piers!" Piers looked a little surprised for a split-second, but only as much as he might be in any case under such casual and easy circumstances. "You caaaaalled, Jude?" Evan looked back at them: he saw Jude had made a miscalculation; Piers was not simply going to give up playing with his animals because of somebody's incomprehensibly selfish and nonsensical disapproval, he was simply having too much fun. "Jude! Take a pill!" Evan commanded. All of them knew that their parents had taken pills and their old saying about them. No one knew why Evan had chosen it, but it struck Jude at the right place. He went quiet and darkened and mulled on with his head down, desperate to curse the earth and all of mankind. 'I swear to God I'll kill him,' he whispered under his breath. While he may have been referring to Piers ostensibly, in fact he was not thinking of him at all. He just wanted to curse everything. His science had been taken away from him and he doubted the future.

The city gates of the northern most point of the western edge of the universal slum were not the same as those coming from the higher north shaped like a half-bottle and guarded from the outside there: where Bartholomew had come through. Bartholomew wondered where the nomads were; his second mother, as he may have called her now, enough time, the necessary time, having passed to mature to her. He looked at the city 'gates'. He could not believe that such an area of polluted and ruined earth could exist just on the boundary of, and environmentally distinct from, the receding fields and the virgin alpine stands. The stench had started as a smell, a waft of sewage air. That was when Piers' creatures finally left him; it was also probably the only time that Jude would have been down enough to take no notice of it: not himself, not God, not anyone: for he was unaware and did not care. That city gate was a garbage dump of unfathomable size flowing with sewage that leaked up in pipes that looked like they had come from the age of the dinosaurs, that's how old they looked. Jude took the first step in, careless and denuded, made like an adult. Bartholomew watched him, grating his teeth with a compassion that he did not want to know about but could not reject. He thought Jude might be receding permanently.

‘He’s like an indigo-plume.’ He did not know why he thought these words; he knew it didn’t matter. Then he laughed at the science that had been a refuge for Jude: from Jude’s better love; but he had not been surprised that Jude had succumbed to it back at the early and alpine tundra. So he followed him right in; then came Evan, then came Piers.

The sluggish dead marsh of sewage and every form of garbage finally came to an end for the boys. They had entered the northern core of the universal slum; they perceived the new world in front of them. They gazed but did not falter. Then a line appeared in the distance: a green line, a procession: the little heads in the green line turned left and right with a naïve and crude and frightening fanaticism, like skewed buttons on an old and discarded and sweated shirt. Even the green was not pure, it was like led, as it was like green. Evan stared with aggressive but contained and shrewd focus; he was not calculating yet, he was taking stock and converting dread that had already been converted; he was spinning-off the rapid redundancy of old and therefore weak habits of thought, dying at the onset of their half-lives like subatomic particles facing the onset of a final irredundance: a natural state well prepared for the present tense—and for the robotic vigilante-army in the green line. He was preparing the silent and invisible onslaught of their inevitable presence in the heart of the northern core—towards which they now began to walk, eating up the space of their collective gaze with each step and leaving nothing behind: these boys were not stupid, and their gaze into the future and into the geographic distance was not silenced just because they had started to walk towards it.

Nine—The Canopy and the Thickness Gauge



Their first hideout was beneath the long and massively spread ceiling of city bushes. They had been allowed to overgrow and spread into the empty lots over the decades and were populated with tunnels everywhere. There were traces of thousands of former inhabitants: bedding, plastic cups, bottles, wrappers, clothes, rags, rotten bread. Interestingly there was no smell of urine and presence of human faeces. The boys did not need to crawl entirely, they could

walk under the fleshy canopy slightly slumped with their trunks, bent forward ever so slightly as it turned out most of the time. They discovered several

dozen “common tunnels,” as Jude coined them, creating a new term of use and understanding for them. They discovered that the former inhabitants, and the original ones before them if there had been any, had been very ingenious people. Every twenty-five meters or so the twirling and interlocking network of tunnels displayed, upon inspection, natural organic flaps of bush mated to each other by connecting branches from either side—grafted to each other over the years, having been prepared and apparently maintained to the degree possible by human hands; their function provided both visual and physical buffer layers as the inhabitants would crawl through them, then through the existing and used and inhabited and domesticated tunnels that were networked together as a practical matter; and then through the next flap, and so on, all in a straight line to the very edges of the natural canopy: it was out there that the inhabitants would relieve their bowels and their bladders. All of the boys were amazed when they finally arranged the nature and the logic of the puzzle on all ends of reasoning about it; “it’s amazing,” said Bartholomew as they traveled together, changing their quarters from the upper section of the canopy to the middle section further down. “They were ingenious,” said Piers in response. “They knew what to do, that’s all,” declared Jude, as they walked and ducked their heads and alternately bent their trunks. “I don’t care what they are, I just know that the place doesn’t stink—” said Evan as Jude cut him off: “Meaning a lesser chance of diseases.” “I’m aware,” said Evan, without aggression, no longer interested. For Evan implications were always implied anyway, clear and lucid to the mind without the need to converse about them unless they were carried in a plan. Bartholomew knew though, and he realized this about Evan and about the nature of things in general, that conversations on various observations were the food of good planning, at least of the need to have to have an accessible—if unconscious—understanding of the finer points of one’s environment, which can come out in no other way except through observations. He did not judge Evan to be lacking in that ability and that understanding and knowledge of things; on the contrary, Evan had his own way of contributing: confirming the things of others with his silence, and making his own observations often in silence and only mentioning them after they had crystallized to a point that was meaningful to him.

Besides, it had been Evan’s plan to go further down the canopy to locate a new quarters for them. Bartholomew knew Evan had made calculations, his focus and his confirming silences bespoke it. Bartholomew knew that everyone else was perfectly aware of this also. It didn’t need to go spoken, they had grown out of such things.

Piers made an amazing discovery: he found an old but intact and silver plated thickness gauge. “It goes to the thousandth of a centimeter!” he exclaimed with glee, unconscious, it seemed for several moments, of his surroundings. “Dammit, Piers, can’t you stay quiet with that booming horse-mouth of yours?” Piers looked up from his thickness gauge and indicated to Evan that he couldn’t. “Look at this,” he said to all of them. Jude came immediately over and bent his head to the apparatus in Piers’ hands. Piers held the gauge with his thumbs and index fingers in manipulating the device. He pressed the clean knob on the button, feeling its stress and resistance. He stopped it when the tip of the metering-stick

reached two digits above the number '5', number six and seven represented by radial black dashes: "That's seven-thousandths of a centimeter!" exclaimed Piers with increased but continuous glee. By way of asking, Jude began to remove the gauge from Piers' hands. Piers smiled and nodded and let Jude take it to his hands. Jude tried it then. "Try fourteen," said Piers. "Double your number?" "Yes," said Piers, as if it was the easiest and the most obvious of things to do. "No," said Jude. "Fifteen, one above your double," Jude said with the inane but totally satisfying joy of challenging an opponent for no other reason but to oppose at any cost and get a kick out of it. He didn't care if it didn't matter either way to Piers, and it didn't, "Fifteen then!" said Piers, his expression unchanged and his eyes focused on the metering-stick. "Why not make it seventy-five, or sixteen, or thirty-three!" Evan said with critical irony, raising his voice himself, giving up hope that either of the two clowns would suppress the booming in their big horse-mouths. Bartholomew broke the whole thing up and said, "Let's go." Jude handed the now-tested thickness gauge back to Piers as all four of them started to walk again in silence and a measured sense and gait of seriousness.

Ten—There's This Old Ruin

Once they had settled in, for they were disciplined, arranging their bedding, their clothes and their rucksacks and the toiletries and each of their own areas for all of these things; it was not as if there was not plenty of space for everything, each boy with his cubby-like space and buffer. . . once settled in, they were tired. They all slept, slept until morning.

Waking up on their crazed bedding one by one, they all had to urinate very badly. Evan wanted to make sure they all used the same "common tunnel," as they had before in their previous quarters. He gave Piers a roll of yarn—extracted from rags of clothing, in fact, and then wrapped up around a ball, it had been Piers' work, after Bartholomew gave him some cursory and terse instructions—and said to him, "Piers, just like before." "Very well, Evan," said Piers, as he bowed, and swept himself away towards the common tunnel, having handed the end of the yarn-ball to Jude, who looked surprised and annoyed. Evan shook his head ever so slightly and let it go. "Good luck, Piers!" yelled Bartholomew. Evan turned immediately around this time in genuine surprise, and said to Bartholomew, "Bartholomew, wh—wh—why did you say that?" "He might need it," replied Bartholomew curtly. Evan was frowning in total confusion, as if he was the undeserving victim of a mutiny. He shook his head and walked away. Jude scowled as he held his groin. "Can't that *Piers* get on? I have seriously got to go." "Go in the corner over there," Bartholomew said, "Evan's gone out front towards the street." "Why?" asked Jude, suddenly, and timely curious, as usual. "He's scouting." "Bartholomew, can't you be direct and just say something in a complete and descriptive sentence or more?" asked Jude in a turn of frustration, as if beseeching a little genius child with his adult weaknesses. "He's gone to the

front of the canopy to espy a route, and destination. . . . he wants to get us, and himself, out of here. He's dreaming of a garden, just he doesn't have one. He says there are still some old ruins from the colonial times that the government hasn't taken down and that now lay idle, and basically forbidden, as a matter of a kind of unspoken bylaw, anyway no one would go in for obvious reasons." "Thank you, Bartholomew," said Jude. "He's obviously spoken with you." "I didn't ask, just listened." "I understand," said Jude sincerely, for he knew the nature of the relationship between Evan and Bartholomew. Just then there came a tug, the signal, on the yarn. "It's about time!" said Jude, gripping his groin, and handing the ball of yarn to Bartholomew, his face turned artificially upward in beseechment. "Go on, go ahead," said Bartholomew, with his matter-of-fact graciousness, as he took the ball from Jude's hand. Jude could hardly get out his whispered "thanks" as he began to hurry away into the common tunnel.

The next day, just after a breakfast of sugared oats—Piers had magically pulled both the sugar and the dry but pleasingly crunchy oats out of his rucksack in his messy corner—Evan told them that they'd be getting out. "Getting out of where, Evan?" asked Bartholomew, a direct challenge not only of the notion but of the release of information. Jude and Piers were all ears, their eyes open fully and watching Evan. "There's this old ruin," Evan started to explain. "I found it about five hundred meters down the canopy from here, obviously south then. It's just across the street, or the road, from the edge of the canopy. The shrub is still dense there because I don't think any of the previous inhabitants here ever had any idea or ever wanted to exit the canopy in that direction, for obvious reasons. I do. We do. The density is cover for us to lie flat whole days if we have to and note down the patterns of traffic on which days and at which times. High-flow, low-flow, mid-flow, when the fishmongers normally pass through to traffic their goods north or south along the road, shrews with tiny nuisance dogs, the occasional cop or bonds officer, the vigilantes, all of it, all of them." He paused, as the others, even Bartholomew, although a little less so, watched agape. He continued: "I've already started." He declared these things as a direct challenge but molded his tone to imply that it was an offer, an offer, the success of whose plan he could not take on by himself; not because maybe he technically could not get it done, but because he simply wouldn't do it without them. Even Bartholomew was not so cynical to fool himself into the false assumption or belief that this was a kind of familial blackmail. No, Evan meant it, he wouldn't do it without them, 'He can't live without us,' Bartholomew thought to himself: 'He's already the loneliest person on the planet.' Bartholomew then immediately took it on himself to look around at Jude and Piers to put out signals that this was of real import and that they better stand together with Evan. Piers looked gravely on, already nodding in the seriousness of a mature and necessary covenant. Jude was the last, he seemed to be flying in his head, twirling, already having exhausted the resources of simply wavering about a decision to assent or dissent. Bartholomew and Piers walked up to him and put their arms on his shoulders to steady him, just in case. Bartholomew shook him, like he might have been a baby, very lightly, very gently, the import being: it's ok, we'll do it, it'll be managed. Jude had closed his eyes, and Piers had put his thumbs on the lily temples of Jude's eyelids and started to massage them. Jude seemed to be mute

to it, deriving nothing from it, but not minding it, letting it go. "Stop it, Piers," said Bartholomew, "what are you doing anyway? Let him be." Piers removed his thumbs from Jude's eyelids and stepped back to watch him instead, indifferent to Bartholomew's comments, his placid expression of concern and need to help unchanged. "Alright," Jude gasped, holding his chest with both of his hands and breathing hard and breathing out. "Ok, ok, we'll do it. I want to get out of here to. I want to go to a garden. I want peace too." They were all surprised at his sudden lucidity, and the hidden cones of his personality coming alive and out in this new forceful desperation that engaged a kind of decisiveness that they had not seen in Jude before, and probably he had not seen himself. But he was natural in it, it was his own form now. Bartholomew looked on with wide eyes, very still in body, with respect. Evan, basically the same thing. Piers looked as if he was going to cry. "Don't," said Evan. He realized his harshness, but was suspicious (unnecessarily), but still changed tact: "There there, Piers, Jude is fine, you know that, that's why you're crying." He paused, and said, "So stop crying," more tersely, as if he could not stand the melodrama. Piers drew out his eyes immediately, and stood tall, apparently not needing to wipe his eyes of even the most minor salting. 'He is very strange,' thought Bartholomew.

Eleven—Passing Through

The day was on them. Piers was on his stomach with his face a quarter meter back from the outer edge of the canopy. He was holding an eye-piece to his right eye, his left eye closed, espying the high wall of bush just adjacent to the cracked and time-barraged cement of the sidewalk across the road. "Nothing," he said, "as expected." Evan was right next to him on his own elbows, listening to every word and breath that came and that he thought might come out of Piers' mouth. He knew Piers could do this part better than anyone. Piers kept the eyepiece to his right eye and swiveled on his elbows a little and turned his head to look down the street, south. "No donkey-men," he said, Evan grimaced. 'Donkey-men' was Piers' amalgam word for anyone who might be a fishmonger trafficking his goods, a cop, or anyone who looked like they played vigilante at night or at any other time, or shrews who screwed their eyes up constantly and looked in all directions for no other reason than to cast evil and disdain on everything, since they were on a personal quest to see everything and everybody as a possible instance of something good or moral which had to be exterminated after being sufficiently ridiculed (although they were too stupid and cunning to be conscious of this fact in the dimension of verbal or conceptual comprehension). But Evan said nothing. Jude was a few meters up, north, of Piers, prostrated on his belly as well, but in a different sort of mood: totally engrossed with his surroundings, and the memorized trajectories of space and time directly in front of him all the way to the fizzy hole-area in the high mounted bush wall barring the old colonial ruin from the world. He knew the sequence. Evan would stand right out onto the sidewalk on their side of the street, and wait, and then pull his

hand with the length of his arm forward and down and they would all move. He was sequenced at that point to move ahead of Evan and go in first, to violently puncture and violate the hole in the high bush on the other side of the street, on a pre-figured countdown that had to be precise to the second. The number was 'five.' Each boy would wait for it as he pummeled the bush and used his body as an advocate for the very idea of a missile. Bartholomew watched, was looking around at all of them. His job was to was to pull up the rear line, to go last, giving Piers some buffer, about six steps, in case Piers did something stupid, but more importantly to cast the last glance around the whole area outside before he tucked in the hole himself, so that they would know the state and the nature of the street, the things on it (garbage cans, defunct hydrants, anything else) and any people around in the distance, up or down the canopy line, up or down the road along the canopy line, or in the worst case, an unsuspected and previously unseen human being either directly in their midst or too near to their vicinity; for which he carried a switch-blade gifted from the ward.

As Bartholomew surveyed each of the three including himself, during a moment of external assessment and self-assessment, concentrated on the imminent renewal of movement, he was not unaware of how he would make sure that the whole action was done right, regardless of Evan's words or anyone else's prior to that moment. Just then, Evan bent forward, pulled out quickly, and stood up tall as fast as he could, directly like a giant root growing out of the sidewalk with the speed of necessity and his own personal wrath which was a demand for paradise. He stood, watching first, then looking. Bartholomew was almost scowling in his silence at this point, his needful and habitual momentary assessments coming out altogether pessimistic, yet he waited and knew there was indigenous and spontaneous competence in the group, individually and as a whole, for he was not a cynic, but he scowled nonetheless, perhaps just to comfort himself and suppress the shaking of his nerves; Jude was fully aware in a different world; and Piers was happy with the whole setup, still thinking about the fact that there had truly been no donkey-men, just as he had forecasted. Evan continued to look, put his right arm down at medium-speed, waited once more, scanned once more, and then pulled his right hand powerfully forward, slicing the air into cubes. "Let's go," he said, the cautious note in his voice heard by all. He was just off as Jude passed him like radium or Achilles without looking in any direction except forward, which was not a direction; Piers sprang and skipped as seriously as he could manage, behind Evan; Bartholomew waited, then waited, still lying on his belly, then Evan looked back in terror into what seemed to him to be Bartholomew's eyes still hidden behind the dense wall of the canopy; Bartholomew sprang, let Piers finish his journey instead of run-walking behind him as had been planned, and ran-walked forward, looking manically in every direction, fully within himself; suddenly he turned around in the middle of the road facing back towards the canopy and began to walk backwards in savvy and slow and controlled side-stepping; he did this just as Piers had bent down to duck into the riven bushes yet trying to look back the whole time and slowing himself down because of it; that had been one of the reasons why Bartholomew had waited, for he knew that Piers would not be immune from distractions and items of interest to him until he actually had to commit to total withdrawal from the road, and Bartholomew wanted to have the authority of distance with Evan

to control that foreseen situation so that, among other things, Evan wouldn't panic; very quickly and with his usual sense for timing and prescience and contempt for ineptness, Jude grabbed Piers by the shirt-collar from his location inside the tunnel of the hole and dragged Piers inside causing Piers' eyes and forehead to painfully swipe against the upper juniper of the hole. Evan had not yet gone in and stood in terror looking at Bartholomew in the middle of the road; Bartholomew was walking backwards, not needing to look but needing to see, to see for the benefit of his soul and not of the tactical navigation that was the order of the day at this very singular moment. Evan said not a word, could not, but would not have even if he could have. He didn't dare. Suddenly Bartholomew turned, moving his head and his eyes north and then south, and spun into a forward last stretch run; he slowed for a split second and looked Evan in the eye which was to tell him to get the hell through the hole first or Bartholomew wouldn't go through at all; Evan immediately understood and for once in his life obeyed without protest, and ducked and was in as the split second concluded itself. Bartholomew looked around one last time, and knew he would have to remember this, then ducked into the hole himself and was gone.

Chapter Four

THE LIBRARY AND THE COUNTRYSIDE

One—Let's Play it by Ear

After Bartholomew's death, the boys stayed low for a time at the old colonial ruin, rarely speaking, but still eating together; still processing their collective routines and duties, which were not many, and which was fortunate. Each one could sleep; they slept a lot. Hours in the afternoon, in the cool, stable room where they each had their corner, and, in that summer, for it had become summer, they could take shelter from the heat: wafts of breeze would flow through the open windows, there was the dank, lovely smell of water in the large basins, the sweet scent of the ancient, foreign oleander sweeping in its presence from outside the window. Piers had moved back down from the upper floor and slept in his old corner, just as he had slept not long after they had arrived with Bartholomew. Jude had taken on a grave strength in the lines of his face; it seemed his whole face was made of lines now, creases and valleys and storms and rivers; he carried his gangly, decrepit body like a champion who would never be, and who would sacrifice everything just to keep it that way. Piers watched him with growing amazement and wondered what he and Bartholomew had talked about those several times, on their long walks around the garden. None of them were suffering from any of the unpleasant strife that had occasioned them at times in the past like conflicting polarities in a dream common between them, except that they had not been dreaming. Evan had become immensely quiet. He was withdrawn to such a far degree that it required of Piers and Jude a good deal of occasional conferencing between the two of them, in private. They were so grieved themselves that they knew that perhaps for Evan such a slough, with his variant personality, was inevitable. Usually they agreed to let it be and to wait an appropriate period that they could not define precisely at that moment, as to say, 'let's play it by ear'; they were under no formal dicta of mourning and had no source for being tempted and drawn into religious comas, they were simply experiencing the primordial and desperately cleaving roots of those comas and dicta as they had been in their original forms. One day Evan walked up to the two of them, and said, "How long has it been?" Piers, momentarily astonished, braced himself, and said very quickly in response, "It's been a month now, Evan." He paused, not knowing what to do. "A month, Evan." Jude looked on, still astonished, not at Evan's words and not of the action

itself per se, but at the fact that the whole thing was taking place at all, that Evan had come to this, had come to the unfavorable and unusual point of coming up for air, of resuscitating himself; that they were all three standing there together just like this; that he and Piers were experiencing the same thing as Evan, even if they had not talked about it. Then Jude remembered when Bartholomew had walked off in the tundra steppe, and the whining Medusa heads that Bartholomew couldn't see when Evan screamed "Bartholomew!" And when Bartholomew had turned around back towards them with only his trunk and his head, pivoting his upper body but leaving his legs stuck and partly twisted: the terror in Evan's totalized eyes during those moments. Jude thought it had been the prospect of losing him that had terrified Evan. "He was afraid of losing him," he thought. But it was fulfilled now, but it was also now very much as it was then: Evan had been the last one of them to come back to his senses at the tundra incident, as he was this time, here and now; the three of them had stabilized Evan at the tundra incident, and they were doing that now also but there were only two of them this time, two of them holding one.

There were no more words spoken that day. They waited out the rest of the day, then slept. It may have been fitful sleeping. Or it may have been the sleep of reconciliation. All in all, they may have been one child as they slept, still of one mind. And perhaps it would be that for the last time.

Two—All for One

All in all, they were one the next morning, or so it seemed. They were. But a new tone was coming, and it implied life, but life on new terms, more adult terms, more reaching, more ambitious.

They were at the breakfast table. Evan was nibbling on some very dried up mildewed pieces of bread crust, and Piers had made tea for all three of them. (For the past month Piers had made tea every morning like that, but he had done it like a ghost, or a phantom, with he and Jude looking at each other every morning and saying very little, and watching Evan chomp on his mildewed bread, sucking it up between his teeth, dipping it in the tea that was proffered to him in silence, and looking as if he were on a different planet, unaware, not even uncaring.) Evan was sitting strangely upright this morning, and he was focused on his tea and his crumbs in a way that they had not seen him do since Bartholomew's death. Piers had decided before he had gotten up from bed to remain silent, only to converse in response, and not to appear contrarian should Evan really come out of his canyon and begin to proselytize a new tone and a new game. Piers was not prepared for what was to actually come though, for it would be more than a new tone, more than a proselytizing of new effects and new causes, of new destinations and newly required resources for new steps to be taken. But he had felt it all the same, he had felt it coming nonetheless, he had only partly deceived himself.

"We're going to leave." That's what Evan said. It just came out of his mouth, it was typical Evan, but he didn't seem overly concerned about the statement

or anything about it (it was clear to him, it was already a given in his mind, if he even conceived of 'it' as a mere and untroubling 'something'). Jude stared at Evan, communicating his strength to him. But as it was, Evan did not care; something had come apart in Evan. But Jude was unmoved by the response, or the absence of one, the lack; Piers thought, "Three people in one world. That's all it's been for almost three years." He shivered inside, and his gut fell. Jude watched him, even Jude's serious face became dreadful. They were both suddenly aware of the total sea change, and wondered how long they might have been fooling themselves. Evan ate quietly and surely and was self-contained, but it was fake, a newly adopted conceit that he took to his own form. As he chewed, his eyes on his crumbs on the table—"tomorrow," he said. It wasn't even an interjection into silence, it was a pure statement that went with the flow of time and agency, it was a part of things to him. Piers said nothing. Jude was about to speak but Piers kicked his leg gently and looked at him firmly, as if to say, 'please, just wait. Later. Wait.' Jude closed his lips but the dreadful seriousness in his face did not change, and there seemed to be the potential for wrath there. "It was three now, but it wasn't three then," Piers said to himself, hardly moving his lips, and not a whisper coming out of them, but his tongue bumping up against the roof of his mouth, while he was perfectly aware of the contradictions in his grammar and his numbers.

The day passed slowly but it did pass. Again, there were hardly any words this day. Not even between Piers and Jude. The strife had returned, like an aggressor. They waited, while Evan lived in knowledge. A day of knowledge. What will be next? thought Piers. What would the Colonel think? 'Would he think we'd gone mad?' he asked himself. 'Aren't we too young for madness? Are we still young? I feel like I might be fifty. Imagine where Evan feels.'

Jude belonged out in the steppes, with the nomads that Bartholomew had told him about, where he could nurture his crevices, his lines, his rivers, his valleys, his own canyons. 'That's where Jude should be now,' thought Piers. 'Riding lamas, and looking valiant, growing his canyons in his own way and to his own wishes.' Suddenly Piers changed tack. He addressed Bartholomew directly, without accusation but as if he had a right to demand some answers, if only Bartholomew could, or would, give them—he wondered—but he didn't want to be too presumptuous or unfair; so he called quietly: 'Bartholomew.' He was in his own space in the garden, near to the far end of the high line of bushes, back behind the old colonial ruin where they rarely went. 'What happened?' Piers asked of Bartholomew: 'I don't understand,' he said. He heard a voice, and it said to him, 'You're going to write things down.' Then the voice ceased, and Piers knew that it was gone and that he would not be allowed to ask any more questions, for now at least; and in this knowledge, he thought about the statement, the answer the voice had given him: 'You are going to write things down.' He did not consider it a supernatural event, since he knew how Bartholomew's parents had lived in the river, and remembered that spirits could be passed on, and that they also made choices, that they were bound by their choices just as men were. 'It was in a book,' he said, noticing the fact of it, that it had been in a book, and that this was a stage; his voice was in a sort of flare, a rumbling, a strange, decisive yet cursory finality, an arbitrariness of dialogue that was yet necessary:

and this was overtaking him, but he knew at the same time that the choice was his. Jude walked over to him and looked at him. "What are you doing?" he asked Piers. "Nothing," said Piers. Piers waited for a second to pass. "Just wait," Piers quietly implored and even demanded. Jude walked away, scanning the garden in a cursory manner for a few moments, and disappeared into his own spaces, his own corridors. Once on his own, Jude held his head to the side and looked with conscious attention through the side of his eyes and wondered about a lot of things as he did so, of himself and of others.

The next day they were packed. Evan had spoken with them, that they would leave in the morning, and that they must pack, and that they would go to the countryside. "It's the house of my father's sister, my aunt," he said. He had not told them last night, he had waited until now, when they were eating breakfast and Piers had poured the tea and Jude was seated and situated, in satisfaction with his tea and bread. "It's good there," Evan said. "It's quiet." He paused. "There's not as much to eat there, there's nothing to scavenge, except the ground itself of course. The ground we can plant though." Evan looked around at them, with a small smile, indicating encouragement, that what he was saying, he had hoped, would be a kind of practical inspiration to them. Neither of them said anything. Then Jude popped out: "Let's go then." Piers was surprised, he thought that this was a complete turn from what he thought he was going to hear from Jude last night (had Piers not silenced him). 'He was going to say something different last night, something terrible,' Piers thought with amazement but with relief, relief that he had not brought anything up about it; yet he was not certain of things, his doubts had merely shifted. After breakfast they left. They did not return through the canopy across the road; they took a back route, over fences, avoiding dogs, stalls and human beings. None of them seemed to care, to care about the risk which they had taken so much care about before, when they had come in to the garden and the old ruin initially. Piers wondered whether it had all been worth it. He thought that Bartholomew might approve of this method though, and might have approved of it before; he was very aware that Bartholomew had been impatient with Evan's methodical approach to everything; what Bartholomew, Piers thought, had probably considered an unnecessary left over from the bloated excesses of a past that none of them would ever understand. Then Piers thought that it might not be exactly that: "Maybe we don't know yet," he thought.

Three—Calligraphy in Flowers

The recoveree is in a state of permanent complaint. She'll walk a million miles to break through every barrier, and she'll walk across the surface of every layer to get to what she believes is hers.

It was a sunny day when they arrived at the old country house. The revolution was invisible there because there was nothing of it there to be made visible.



It had never come there. It was a disregarded place, region, hardly even an outpost, somewhere in-between the mountains to the west (mountains that climbed into existence from the middle-steppes from the southern direction from which the three boys had come) and the skewed, distanced and real outposts at the far northernmost top of the steppes, where the revolution guarded itself from the outside. Evan looked around, and heaved a heavy chest, and breathed out. He looked at the ground, and goose pimples went all over his body. His mouth was turned down as if in amazement that he was here, that he was there, and that he might be everywhere. He looked at Piers and Jude, who watched him; they seemed to understand him

now, why he had wanted to come here, for they saw that they would be happy here too. Jude took on a stern look of compliance and said to Evan: "It's good, Evan." Piers looked Evan in the eyes, engaging him directly: "It is good, Evan," he said. Evan looked at them and mumbled a pleased "hmm," and went towards the house. "I'll open the door," he said. "I remember the key. It's up here," he said as he raised his arm up—"in the evestroughs." He moved his hand and his fingers around blindly for several long moments; "we'll take a window out if we can't find it," he said calmly, but it was evident that he wanted the key for more reasons than the practical one. "I've got it!" he said (it was not a loud exclamation but it was full-voiced and sincere and very real), and he looked back at them, shyness in his uplifted brow that carried at the same time the language of certainty. He said it with exceptional and uncharacteristic joy (at least when compared to recent times). There were lichens on the key. He moved a few steps over to the door and turned around with his head to look at Jude and Piers again, who were standing there smiling encouragingly (like children who might have been parents), and smiled his shy, entreating smile, a certain smile, and then turned and put his arm towards the door and inserted the key, bending his elbow slightly and shifting his body just a little forward. The door opened immediately as he turned the key full way and then pushed. There was hardly even a sticky or sucking sound to indicate the length of time the door had been shut into and against its frame.

Opening the curtains in the morning: a new world, a very new world. The sun came in through the reverent windows and its rays were pleasant in the countryside; they were downy and airy in the dry and gray and shady must of the large and furnished living room; upholstered furniture, wooden garments

and ramparts; green wallpaper with Chinese flowers looping and spiraling, the original artisan having stayed within the limits of his form (forms are always made better and strengthened by respect for calligraphy in flowers). All three boys had fallen asleep immediately the afternoon before, each on his own bed, each fallen into the lull of security, of certainty. They had only been testing the beds for use, and then they just fell asleep on them. Evan stepped back from the curtains and gazed through the reverently alive windows, scanning the nothing outside that now meant everything. He wondered to himself what Bartholomew would have thought. He knew he'd never know. This saddened him. He had placed high value on Bartholomew's opinions, even if he would never get a committed judgment on anything from him. He was just like that, thought Evan. That's exactly how he was. He wouldn't commit. He thought this with sadness and an incomprehension that still plagued him. His molars clenched a little and he took on a very sad sternness and he knew that he was doing that and he felt just fine with it. He thought of Piers and Jude with pleasure; again, the goose pimples going up into his temples and around the back of his head and down his arms where the follicles in his skin were made aware and then took stock of the universe for several seconds, which might have never ended if Evan could have chosen. He felt like Bartholomew had understood Piers and Jude much better than he had, perhaps in ways that he didn't know about, might not be able to know about, he thought with a certain disdain. He knew that Bartholomew had sometimes accused him of an over reliance on facts; it was the one thing, when Evan thought about it, that Bartholomew had told him about directly and with almost a commitment to a judgment, which he would have probably disputed. Again, Evan felt a certain disgust with himself, and felt regret, and opined it, pushing his palm against his forehead and rubbing it with the hill of flesh beneath his thumb. He shook his head back and forth and decided to let it go, but to hang on to it all the same, not to ever throw it away or into disregard. Sitting back on the chair in the room now and looking out into the sun outside and imagining the mountains and the fields in his mind's eye, he knew that at the same time there were some things he had to take care of here, that he mustn't forget this, that he must also stay focused on his goals. He hoped that he could situate Piers and Jude comfortably so that they wouldn't be bothered by him as he pursued his interests in the small library room that his father had used when they had come to visit during the summer months. One of Evan's first acts that day had been to go to look to see if the books were still there. He had not believed that they had gone anywhere, but he sighed relief that they were when he saw them.

Four — Aristotle and Shakespeare

Where in King Lear or Hamlet there are vested sureties everywhere, the world of the countryside was more like a place, or a grounds, where Romeo might have brought Juliet to live for a day protected by the suited and amiable eye of the Franciscan Friar. But perhaps it was not like that at all; or perhaps Romeo

is a crusader, or a philandering cooch-hopper. The name Macbeth might crowd everything out and tell the star-crossed lovers that they'd be cursed.

Thought Evan, 'Every once in a while they return you to point zero.' Evan was sitting at the medium-sized desk in the small and dark library. Some sun split through the thick curtains; where the light was not as thin as needles it was vaguely coarse and ruminative, perhaps like it may have been for Aristotle in a torture chamber. Evan held his head in his single hand, his other hand splayed cursorily across the hewn and roughly polished wood top of desk; of the books that lay next to his hand (whose abridged sides he could feel with the back of that hand like they were the back of his mind), he felt like jamming them into the faces of the damned; he imagined pummeling the Medusa heads to death with those books. He was still ashamed and would remain ever so, of what he considered his cowardly totalization and freeze in the face of the heads that had come so close (he was still certain) to removing Bartholomew from the earth and returning him as a vampire. There was a pause in the already slow-moving time of the room, when he said, 'I have claims.' The voice tore away at everything. Damnation, angel, devil, morality, indifference, care, impulse, sanctity, sanity, madness. It tore away everything and left the one thing that universally branched off with the purity of everything that was and could be, the one thing that had a chance of mattering to the universe because it mattered in it: choice, which branched off like the bulb to the shoot or even the tree to the sky in the best of worlds; branched off to free interpretations, full of desire, but portending its own loss because it had the ability to grow terrified of its own consequences. The devastation that was taking place in Evan then found itself caught up by its own logic, like a highly developed troll system. Everything that had been devastated returned like a hurricane-chaos, angel, devil, morality, indifference, care, impulse, sanctity, sanity, madness. Piers opened the door and poked his head in. "We're playing ball, Evan." He said this in a tone of extremely mild entreatment, even as a statement of a denuded and corporeal fact that might not be suited to a situation that might need to be respected and even momentarily revered as incorporeal and spiritual, to encourage the idea that the whole thing could be taken in any way Evan needed to take it. What Evan did was almost to be expected under the circumstances. He lifted his drowning head and begged the terminus to let him go, and it did, and said, "I'd like to play, too." Piers was totally aware of the fact that there was a serious situation going on for Evan in that room, in general and right now; but Piers understood well how best to proceed in most situations, especially those that required that particular kind of thinking: "Let's go then," he said. Piers was like a wizard in his element, but kept it all to himself and preferred to think nothing of it. Evan got up from the chair with a kind of lightening speed uniquely his own, and as they walked out Piers thought that a curse had been lifted away from his young friend—some one, he thought wistfully, who was becoming his old friend; and then he wondered at the sense of this. He looked back at Evan as they walked out into the sun with Jude waiting with the ball, and saw that what had been an extinguished gaze just moments before was now alight. Evan spun around and laughed and looked like he was just waiting to catch the next rainbow. Jude said, "Look out, Evan!" and threw him the ball. Evan caught it and threw it over to Piers like a pro.

'... many layers, none of them heaven.' 'None of a normal earth, Evan. It's not preclusive.' 'Not of hell it isn't.' 'No, Evan,' his father said: 'Understand me.' 'You want creative intervention, Father. It doesn't work.' 'Since when did you start calling me 'Father'?' 'I'm sorry, Papa.' 'You should be with your friends, outside.' 'I know, Papa.' 'Then go.'

Five—Planning for Valiance

"It's my father," said Evan. "I thought it might be," said Piers. Piers looked up at the sky and said, "wherever my father is, I hope he's a long way from here." They both nodded to each other, each plodding the toe of his shoe into the earth. "Sometimes when I look at Jude I think that he's Bartholomew." Piers was quick to respond: "I don't." "Mm," Evan acknowledged, accepting that, perhaps preferring it. "You miss him," said Piers, half question, half assertion. "Yeahp." "Did he ever tell you about the nomads?" asked Piers. "Once, it was about the lamas, and the thing with the horses, and the rich cousins who thought the horses were better." "He believed that the lamas were valiant," responded Piers: "Like his playmates believed, the children of the nomad mother. When I look at Jude that's what I see, valiance, riding on a lama, out on the steppes with the nomads." "You think he's tired of it here, you think he doesn't like it here?" Evan seemed a little concerned, even like he might feel a little guilt. "No, I just think he'd be happier. It would suit him, I'm almost certain." Evan's brow went up with a question mark folded in his skin: "Do you have something in mind?" Piers pulled the sides of his mouth down a little bit, not so characteristic of him, and said, "Yes. We're all going to have to do something at some point, we'll end up splitting, it's inevitable. So we should try to help—" "I understand," said Evan. "I suppose it's possible," he said. "But maybe we should ask him." "Of course," said Piers, accepting it as a natural and welcome piece of news. As Evan walked away towards the house, he felt strangely at peace; looking up to the house he felt a place for it in his heart; he turned around and looked at Piers, and said, "What didn't work for Bartholomew you think will work for Jude," an assertion, and yet a playfully wily, peaceful proposition. "It might be that he'll go in Bartholomew's place, if he does go. Anyway, who knows what Bartholomew would think about it now, five years after the fact," said Piers. "Maybe he'll find Bartholomew there," said Evan, with a smile, and turned around and walked through the open door of his aunt's house. Evan had told a white lie. Bartholomew had told Evan a lot more about the nomads than just the lamas and the opinions of the rich cousins. Piers thought it was funny and lollopped the ground with the toe of his shoe for the last time that day. He saw Jude coming in from the fields, the great and wondrous steppe; he had a bag of roots slung over his shoulder and kept his head pointed towards the ground as he walked. He did not notice that Piers was watching him, he seemed distant in himself or out on the steppe someplace, just not here. Piers

turned towards the house and walked to it, not wanting to spoil things. He felt an infinite gratification. His mind was a rosy red.

Six — To Be Valiant

'To be valiant,' said Jude, alone in his room.

Evan had proposed the idea to Jude. Evan had insisted on it, and Piers had agreed; Piers didn't need to succumb, he was happy about it. Evan approached Jude one day. He broached the subject carefully, and with the forethought that he always remembered was so characteristic of Bartholomew, which he had made his own now as a conscious effort that had started in studious imitation of him; but he kept to the memory, if only to remember and do nothing else, perhaps with respect to the fact that one day everything might just self-destruct. "You remember the lamas, Jude?" "Bartholomew's," asserted Jude. "That's right," said Evan. Jude had an immediate response, but the response was also located at that moment in a continuum in which it lived independently of Evan's queries and his unequivocal gaze on a set of intentions which Jude was already ready to fathom. "They're valiant," Evan said as Jude let his response lie dormant in its independence. "The old people said so," Evan went on: "So did Bartholomew's younger playmates, and probably their mother, Bartholomew's mother nomad." Evan paused for a moment without cunning or verbal forethought, then said, with a girl like lilt in his voice at the end of his question: "Do you remember her?" "When he talked about her you could see that he thought that it could stop the stars from crossing him. I hated to see it," said Jude. "He wasn't given enough time," said Evan. "He had actually needed more time." Evan said this for the life-affirming effect, as a reason and not as a negative aspiration, not for the life-denying, not for the melancholy or the black thoughts of the actual tragedy that had taken place with Bartholomew's life. "So I'm supposed to go instead," said Jude, stated as half assertion and half question, joined without irony but with the decision to get an answer. "Maybe," said Evan, uplifted, but imparting the honesty that it might not be true, and that it didn't matter. "In the end it doesn't matter, it's for you, for your life only, you can remember, but the future will be yours, even if the memory travels with you; I personally am grateful that it will travel with me. If I was a different person I am certain I would go myself, but that's just me, I have my reasons though." Evan paused: "But it's up to you." Evan paused again: "We have all the time in the world though, even Piers needs to make a decision at some point for himself, but time for us is also irrelevant, let it go on forever and let us stay here forever if we would like to; I could be selfish and try to convince the both of you to stay here with me, but then that would be 'with me' in quotes—" Evan broke off. Then he said, "I don't know how to explain it; the quotes wouldn't matter, they'd be meaningless: it would be *with me* and it would also mean *with you and Piers*. But there must be choices for us. I've decided to stay here, it could be equally

that you and Piers might decide to stay here while I might want to go back to the city and murder the bastards who did this too us, and then let come what may." He knew he had spoken too many words, and he stopped before he convoluted the thing, to stay at the truth he had arrived at. "I understand now," said Jude, timely as always. Evan started to walk away when Jude said, "Evan! Have you given up your books?" Evan hardly needed to turn around. "No. I've just put them off for a while." "Aha," said Jude, remembering events prior to this when he had asked Evan a similar question, before the old colonial ruin. Evan turned and restarted his walk.

Seven — Spring Moths

Evan had been sitting at what now had become his desk in the small library. He was thinking. He would not go into the books until he was safe with it, until he had the umbrella spring moths that would give him his first cover. He had only written so far (he had not read anything yet), jots and entries on pieces of paper, and didn't know where they were coming from. 'Confusing romance with psychology doesn't do anyone any good,' he wrote. It may have been in reference to his parents' inability to protect their lives as members of the public clerisy. 'How can one guerilla take on a state guerilla?' That was another entry, just down from the other. 'The answer is no guerillas,' he thought, unsure, then with intensity. 'Otherwise there's no stoppage. It just keeps on hemorrhaging.' He wrote these things down quickly. He was anxious. He moved back and forth between the murderous in him and the aspiration for probity. As much as he would have liked to deny it, he knew that in the end, in the acts which finalized consequences, murder and probity were mutually exclusive. He tipped his ear to sounds coming through the library door. It was the sound of packing, of clothes mixing and piling and getting folded and of things of utility getting placed in pockets. It was the sound of knots being tied and bags being slung. It was simply Jude bent over at his work of preparation to leave. Evan got up and walked out the door and saw Piers at a separate place in the room arranging Jude's things. Jude himself was testing the two bags for bulk and weight, trying to flatten out protrudences. "Let me help," Evan said. Both Piers and Jude looked up from their unique tendings and took a look at Evan. "Anything?" he asked. Piers spoke up, reading the situation as a part of the calm shade of the room. "No, that's okay, Evan. Really, we're almost finished." Jude put his head back down and continued with the rest of what he had to do. Then Piers returned to finishing up his part as well. Evan walked out the partly opened door and grabbed a mug from its place on the awning below the window. He dipped it in the large urn of potable water and lifted it to his mouth and drank. He turned around and looked out at the steppes and wondered what would really become of them all. Maybe they would all become one.

Eight—The Two of Us

When Jude left, Evan and Piers spent many hours together in the sitting room, whole days. They sat on the upholstered couches in the room in the bent up light, musty and acquired, acquired and requisitioned for them each passing second. They ate breakfast together just as the four of them and then the three of them had done for such a long time, for what seemed like an eternity. They would pass through the air of the room like ghosts on their way to a circus, when in fact they were passing through to reach the outside where they could pull up a drag of water, or fill a cup of tea from the spigot of one the two urns. They each were reading books from the small library, which was an open place now for both of them, a pantry with lots of food for their developing thoughts and for the maturation of their experiences and their possibilities. Piers would chuckle sometimes as he thumbed through a particular page, as if marveling at the idea that things could finally continue to the next page: a constant source of gratification for the constant gardener in him. Such moments were not rare and were always ratified, against the wishes of ninety-nine percent of mankind. It was Evan who one afternoon directed his eyes towards the ceiling and into the infinite and said, "I've been reading the most peculiar passages in this book." Piers looked up, and said directly: "Like?" "Like about the trolls of the earth," said Evan, his face tightening but his eyes staid for the moment. Piers' mental antennae became consciously aroused, and he said, "Yes, the trolls. We've had issues with them, haven't we?" Even in this case, Piers' constant attention to his gardens and the gardens of others made him consciously or unconsciously aware that it might not be wise right now to descend into what could be considered an unnecessary depth of mood. He addressed Evan's concerns directly: "Let it go, Evan. It's all over. It doesn't matter any more. It never did." Evan may have taken umbrage at the idea that 'it never did' but he did not do that. He knew Piers' point from top to bottom, and that's probably why he answered the way he did: to provoke Piers' salves, and bring them up for a while as a common estuary that they might share for a while, as long as that while may last. "Yeahp," Evan said with a hard and momentarily finalizing drop on the 'p'. Then he got up and walked across the room like a ghost out of his own machine.

Evan ended up spending a lot of time outside in the garden after that. It was the last position Piers would have predicted Evan taking up. Evan dealt in categories, roles, positions, nothing was black and white, it was only black or white. That's why it was more than just a kind of thing that Evan had taken up, it was a role, a position, a kind of category at best if not a full one, that Evan had decided to engage himself in. He became studiously devoted to both the art and the nature of the keeping a garden. He tended everything, and tended to everything, and did not want Piers involved. That was never said because Piers knew it anyway as he knew so many things. And Evan knew that so he never had to press the point or broach the idea and possibility even in preemption. Piers took to wandering out in the fields on the steppe, never going far but just far enough to see Evan as a black ant in the distance bent over at his task in his garden. It was better for now for Piers that art and nature should work

together well yet that he be able to pretend that the world was still flat, that he could always see Evan in the distance without the earth rotating him away in a vanishing horizon as Piers vanished into his own. It was all a matter of which steps would take place. It is strange that the wonder no longer lay with Evan, who was content now, but with Piers, who had to wonder to himself now, as one does. To tell the truth he was a little surprised with himself. From that moment on it was a new dimension.

As the months passed Piers began to wander further out in the fields nearer to the far ends of the horizon; he would smile at almost nothing, because whatever he smiled at might turn out to be everything. Evan seemed to be far away at those times, and when Piers imagined him he imagined him in his own private world. They still sat together in the mornings in the after-dawn bent light of the sitting room, where all aerial disturbances had disappeared, still ate breakfast together and even dined together, for they had set up rituals at least, there was no reason for one to ignore the other or to break with the gifts and hardships of the past that they had shared together with two other people whom, despite the direction of things, they would both remember for the rest of their lives.

Thinking that nature and art had worked and completed their mission, had there been one, one day Piers disappeared over the horizon. He took one last look at Evan in the distance, and the silhouette of Evan's bent over figure attending to the earth had turned into a world for both of them.

Chapter Five THE PINE FOREST

One—Who Paints, Gives Perspective

There was a breeze blowing through Piers' hair. His bangs had grown long recently, he had asked that he be able to grow his hair out: "like an old man should be able to," he had explained to the mistress and householder. "Do as you wish," she had told him, "you'll do what you like anyway," she added as she turned her head with the speed of the breeze, like a leaf suddenly gaining the confidence that it had assumed to be its own a long time ago. 'She's being coy with me again,' thought Piers to himself, smiling. 'She must like me, my suspicions confirmed,' he muttered with a sense for the excellent sexual bargaining available to old men.

Piers had grayed nearly thirty years ago, but that had not stopped him. Presently, presently now being the case for the past twelve years, presently. . . presently he was stacking books in the library of the main house, where he had tutored the mistress's children for that same amount of time—twelve years. Or that was what he was supposed to be doing, since the children were on holiday with their father and he was supposed to be assigning himself tasks to keep himself busy, as he had been told to do by the lady of the house, the mistress. Actually he was taking a walk in the pine woods islanded



and corralled by short swathes of white aspen, and had left off the books an hour ago. The pines were not magnificently high, they were medium growth pines: layers of virgin stand. The playful aspen blew in the leaving and stemming canopy-network high above him; he gazed up into that splayed canopy of thin white branches swaying in fast-slow glimmering troughs, he heard the small but infinitely numerous leaves asserting their presence in the wind, the sound of 'shhhhhhh' 'shhhhhhh' 'shhhhhhh,' pleasantly noisy, even deafening when the wind picked up and decided to roll the earth. Basil, the youngest of the children, would beg Piers to take him out to the land-bound stiles of un-apprenticed aspen and let him lie on his back and stare into the wind and the sun and the leaves turning the levers of heaven. Piers missed the children, he missed Basil especially. He was reminded of so many things that he had not thought about for years: 'decades,' he thought to himself, squeezing his hands. "You see how they brave it all together?" Piers had asked Basil the last time they had been out this way. The boy had slanted his eyes over at Piers, not knowing what to think of his question. "The wind and the sun and the leaves," said Piers, as though he had received no response to a surety: Piers saw that he had disturbed the boy's enchantment. "There are more than three of them braving it," answered the boy matter-of-factly to mask his annoyance and to relieve himself of a mite. Having understood the question and having supplied an answer to Piers, the young boy pushed his eyes back up towards the canopy in satisfaction of what he had assumed to be the imposed waiting period, thinking Piers might leave him alone with his fervor: for the wind and the noise, and the sun and the branches and the leaves and the sky; for a while anyway. Piers would have no such thing. "Which arrrrre?" he proposed, or suggested. The boy would not look at him but his face became visibly sterner, he wanted a new tutor. He would tell his mother. But then he remembered how much he liked Piers, how many things he allowed him in his own, misunderstood life. So he decided to answer. "The noise and the branches and the sky," he said in quick order, suppressing as far as he could any trace of impertinence. Piers grinned and clapped his hands; he decided to let the boy be now and didn't press further.

One morning Piers was up early. The morning air was fresh and embracing. He walked out onto the private promenade in front of his small house that had been his for twelve years now and stepped down onto the pine cover blanketing the earth. Most of the pines had been cut away a century ago from the property, but some were spared and lived happy lives out here where Piers had his small house. Piers folded his arms across his chest and looked up into the blue and dewy and seemingly temperate sky; he breathed in as he did this and then he saw the white cotton drag of a line emitting from a small silver glare of light extending itself high up in the world and across the sky. He moved his eyes down and looked out upon the long and diminishing line of relay towers for electricity supply. Piers was not dull: his mind was always alight with form and memory: he thought immediately of Bartholomew and his appropriated electricity box in their cement building fifty years ago, when they were boys, orphaned by the state and made pariahs in a slum of universal proportions, huddled and scavenging and sometimes half-starving but surviving and striving for any kind of paradise in a living hell. Then in his person he felt a momentary sense of futility, or of

pretense: it was like that flying fish in the sky might suddenly plunge to the earth. Piers was not often depressed, but at this time, for these moments, for the minutes, he felt like hell and clenched his old hands as he tried to break the negative surge. All of the things, all of the boys' faces and names, went through his head: Evan, Jude, Bartholomew, the old colonial ruin, the universal slum, the bush canopy and its network tunnels and its debris of clothes, rags, bottles, the road between it and the ruin, the ward cells and the stockyard where they had been gathered by the morally hewn and pockmarked colonel to be put on the road to escape, the colonel himself, then Piers' his own arm on Jude's with a sense of urgency, Evan's terrified eyes, Evan's relaxation into the earth a few years later, Jude's migration then, Bartholomew's glorious but un-regarded death. Tears rolled down over his old and bony cheeks and he raised his hand to push them away. He was aware of a darkness in man that was more than dark, holding back sobs and swallowing the salt in his mouth and suppressing it in the cavity of his chest; darkness that was much more than a crude arithmetic of a soul added to a biology; it was something worse: it was a calculus. He had a vision and saw in that calculus the general blight of everything, and he refused to try to reason his way out of it, he knew it could not be successfully fought, and then he let himself bend down to the ground and sob. And then he saw the possibility of something when he heard a voice that he recognized all too well as a mischievous and lovely voice, a cunning and intellectual voice, a voice that he missed, call out to him, as he turned his head to it, "Piers! Tutor! Uncle! I'm back!" The boy ran up to the now-standing Piers and jumped into his arms and hugged him and then pulled his head back from him and looked into his tutor's eyes and said, "I want to take a walk!" Piers put the boy down and the boy grabbed Piers' hand. But before he pulled him with it he looked up at the old uncle and, remembering that his mother and his older brothers and even his father (which had been unusual, he had very vaguely sensed at the time) had told him that Piers had gotten more melancholy over recent years (as though to tell the boy that he must remember that the old man was getting to be an even older man), he scolded the old tutor for having cried. "I haven't cried," said Piers with a grand pretense to dignity, always the master of fates and trials and proceedings. "Yes you have!" cried the boy as he pulled Piers' arm, but not bothering to look up at him. Then Piers said to himself: 'Everything's as it should be.' He let himself be towed along by Basil even if he couldn't quite keep up and very much in spite of it. There was no reasoning with this. It was just too good. So he thought he would play: "Be humble, Basil! I'm old, I can't keep up like this!" "Yes you can!" cried Basil, pulling Piers along, not needing to look up at him, alone and yet not alone in his child's world, in full pursuit of his goal. The boy was not protesting though, he was declaring a fact! There is no sin in age, but the ravens of the earth had been lifted off of Piers' back, they had flown away complaining, they had been driven away by mischief and love and cunning and intellect: and everything was still possible in the world: the grave could still be formed.

If Basil could be the answer to his own world and also to his, as Piers thought, what could he be for the other world, the one where all people inhabited a strange universal consciousness, the presence of a collective awareness and the awareness of that presence in truth? It was this way every time. Piers thought

about the amazing possibilities the boy had in the new world, the world after the revolution, the world now after all of the hybrid and national and international reconciliations; after the return of the pews and the parishioners and the lawyers; and the doctors and the scholars, and the teachers! Which of he could count himself a quantity of 'one.' Twenty years ago, during the reconciliations, he knew that someday the generations would come full cycle and give birth to a real new one, one that would be robust and full with possibilities. He also knew he had to get back to the house because Basil would be coming for his morning lessons at nine o'clock.

One night Piers had a dream: a large brass bead in a high-ceilinged room with an open fireplace, dead from cold in the morning, flat ash. The bed covers were downy and the pillows were like little elephants. But no one had slept on them, no cheek had graced the pillows. He did not walk closer to it, but moved away. He walked outside and saw a boy digging in the ground. He saw him pull out a little radish and clean it with his hands and his spit. Then he saw him eat it. Piers wondered to whom the child belonged. Piers turned his body around to look at the house and scratched his head. He turned around back towards the child again. After a moment of hesitation, he cried out: "Hey!" The boy moved his head up and straightened his kneeling body towards the sky like a shy little sapling, still not knowing whether he'd taken roots or not. The boy didn't say anything immediately. He didn't move. He kept his eyes nervously pointed towards Piers. Then he slowly got up and with a greater quickness than that began to walk away down the sloping high land that the little house rested on, down towards the river. The boy turned his head back towards Piers and walked more quickly, in a half-run. Piers didn't move. He just watched. The boy disappeared in the dark form of trees that had accumulated on either side of the river. The boy turned his head back for an instant before entering and was gone. Piers was frightened when he could not see whether the boy's eyes had risen up or not. He seemed to remember a set of dark flashing eyes. Piers woke up in a sweat and cried out.

One day the mistress of the household, the mother, the wife, and Piers' fantasized courtesan, came to visit him in his house, with a preamble. The day was soothingly warm and the sap in the pines and the tenderness of the hundreds of needles created a distinct aroma on that day. The preamble was simple. She walked over to Piers and took his old hand and placed it on her breast. She sat him down on the bed and said to him, "Old Uncle, if it should come that my husband ever disappears and I am found dead you will discover that Basil is alive because they would not kill him. That at least has been arranged; as for his older brothers I cannot say, but you will not be responsible for them. But for Basil, that is a different story. That will be your story. So do not go and die on me." She got up quickly and walked away. Piers thought with a sense of frustration with himself that he had let himself go, that he did not know what was going on in the outside world any more. But he had not seen anything in the newspapers. But he did not look at them every week. He was very disappointed with himself and wrung his hands with the nervousness of an old man, but then realized again that he had been appointed and that he must assume the mastery of a new fate;

or so it had seemed. He collected himself. He became calm. She had timed this, he thought. He had always known that she was exceptional: exceptional. Basil walked in without knocking as he always did, and before Piers could make out his figure in the dark the little boy pushed him over in play, and said, "Uncle! Get up!" The boy was in a state of laughter, surfeited with it, as Piers pulled himself up and grabbed the boy by his hands and said, "You! You rascal!" He picked the boy up and held him over his head and smiled at him, in the recesses of his mind wondering what would become of everything while at the same time trying to gather what available certainty there might be for them. "Uncle!" the boy cried: "Put me down!" Piers laughed and placed the boy on his feet. "I want to go for a walk!" the boy cried. Piers let the books go for now, but now he was doing it with calculation, hewing himself to one. One teacher. One guide. One student. But hadn't it always been so? Hadn't he waited for this? Or better said, had he not been preparing for this since he was almost as young as Basil himself? Perhaps he could carry 'one' through. One child, one boy. If just this once; where before he couldn't, had not been able. He realized that even he himself was not immune to the undeserved fatalities of youth. Then in the memory of form and in the form of memory he thought of Evan's crusts of bread, what had been his childhood friend's obsession with the possibility for medicinal effects, a full fifty years ago. Then he threw it out of his mind as quickly as he had let it in. But not out of disrespect, not even out of disbelief. But out of what he had seen.

Two—Fall



Piers spent several weeks like this with Basil and then the summer closed out with a few early showers and northern blasts to hurry autumn away. He saw less and the less of Basil's father, he had always seemed to be away on business or other matters of which Piers could not possibly be aware. Whenever the father came back to the dacha, he seemed to have already left the next day, yet it was always impossible to verify. One day Basil's mother, in recent weeks now less matronly and more matronly to Piers, perhaps it depended on the day, he did not know: one day she passed him on the grounds like she might be going on a walk, only she was walking

too quickly, carrying herself with certainty and containment but moving with an urgency; her hem of her long dress blew up against her front body and her hair blew back more than was customary or appropriate. He watched her as she strode with long steps. She turned her head to him and her eyes were flashing and they were dark. Still in motion she turned her head straight again to eye her path apparently as people do, but it seemed to Piers that she had actually not seen him, that she had been blinded in every way including knowledge of his virtual presence near her. Basil walked out of the shade of the door of Piers' house to take his hand, Basil's other hand holding a piece of fruit that he had taken from inside the house. Piers did not know whether to look down at the boy or to keep looking out into the trees; he took it half way and looked over the boy's head, downwards, and said to the boy, composing his voice to familiarity: "Mamma's going tomorrow to see Papa, she told me." Basil took a bite out of the fruit and said as he chewed, "No, Uncle, Mamma already left. This morning, I went to her room and saw that her bed was made and the curtains drawn." The boy said it very casually, as if to add a minor correction, or qualification, to Piers' statement. Yet Piers wondered at the astuteness of his simple words, the uncannily legalistic nature of the statements.

A few days later he saw her return in a long black sedan. He was quietly agape from his vantage point although he was not a voyeur as he watched her step out of the sedan. He saw that she was wearing pants that were grey and had a set of careful trims. She skipped up the steps with the speed of a woman twenty years younger than her. The speed of a girl, not of a mother. Not of a wife. Not even of an origin anymore. She had been cut off. By something or someone. Piers' face became calm and his mind grew into a certain rational view on matters; he had started to reflect opinions on things now, he had now begun to take on an attempt to understand; as he had done half a century ago. Basil had gone back into the house. Piers knew that he had a charge now, a new orphan, another plain sign of things. Specifically he had noticed that Basil's mother was dead even as she emerged from the sedan and hurried up the steps. She had told him about this; he granted her a lot for that. But she wasn't there anymore.

There seemed so much time for sleep these days. Sometimes in the middle of a nap in the afternoon Piers would open his eyes and stare into the hardly luminous darkness of his room and wonder whether he was handling the situation in the right way. Basil spent most of his nights in the second room of the house; Piers could look after him that way, it was better for him to be there than in the large house where his parents hardly existed anymore except as ghosts coming and going in their separate worlds. Piers knew how fortunate it was that Basil was still so young in his mind. He was quite aware that it had been one of the reasons that his mother had passed him over to him. All three of them would be able to live easier with their memories of what the past had been: that had been strong fare for her. Piers had questioned himself sometimes about the father though, not questions of the doubting kind but of the kind that might aim or perhaps someday conspire to help the boy in his journey through life. The father had always been a slightly reticent almost shy man for all of his worldly worth and affairs, but it seemed that he carried a special fondness for the boy,

for his youngest. He made occasional visits to Piers to inquire generally about the boy and about Piers' needs—was everything OK, did he have everything he needed. About the boy he wanted to know how his studies were going, what were Piers' impressions of the boy's sensibilities and intellect. Yet the father was very careful about this, he wanted to spare everyone as many difficulties as possible and he made it quietly clear that he was available to arrange things or to exert his influence anywhere and anyhow it might be needed. At the same time the father handled the finer inquiries about his son with a special care that touched Piers. It became clear to Piers after the second or third visit that the man was serious but that he had his worldly influence to attend to with great need. Piers knew that the three of them—mother, son, uncle/tutor—depended on the man's attendance to those needs and to that worldly influence for everything that they could call their own in this world.

Life began to take on a rhythm for Piers and Basil. They studied and went on walks. They told each other stories, from fantasies of their own to the fantasies of others found in books. Piers encouraged Basil not only to narrate people and their stories from his imagination but also to observe all of the life forms that they encountered on their walks, from ants to trees, from mushrooms to gophers. To the wild geese in the sky, to the special lunge in their flight formations. With the boy's sensitive soul, crafty as he was, Piers knew that the more of this they did meant the more inner resources for the boy as he grew older and would have to face the challenges of life. He also knew that it would lead to moral conjecture at some point. On their walks back Piers would let the boy pick up pieces of interestingly shaped wood or rocks that he liked and dunk them into Piers' small rucksack. Had the boy not been with Piers, the unlikely stranger in the forest would have seen Piers and thought him to be an old hermit still humping his way through life like an old stand of virgin pine rejected by loggers. As it was that's exactly what he felt like sometimes, and the raggedness of his presence sometimes pleased him to no end and he'd sneak up on unthinking squirrels and jump and yell 'Ha!' flinging his arms out in front of him, jumping like an old hunchbacked squirrel himself. "Uncle! Don't do that! It's not fair!" Basil would protest. "They're stupid animals, I enjoy it!" Piers would protest in mirth and a certain pretense to cruelty as he silently quieted his mind and looked for the next squirrel, knowing that he could report back good news to the boy's father the next time the man would ask about his son's progress.

The years passed. The father and mother came and went, less and less like phantoms, and increasingly more like invisible people; the mother's infrequently observed gait became less sure of itself, the young woman had seemed to have gotten too young too quickly: there was weariness in her walk now. Where before the father and the mother had occasionally been seen together emerging from the sedan, or in the garden around the corner discussing unknown things, Piers never saw them together anymore: it felt to Piers like a stagnant trough of something that he tried to push away. The father still came to inquire and visit; but the mother had never come, when she saw the boy it was in her own presence with the attendance of no one else. Piers did not ask the boy about those visits to his mother in the main house, he had only told Piers that the next meetings were

prearranged each time he saw her. The years had also shown Basil to turn out to be very studious in general: as if that had already been prearranged also. Piers felt the security of things but he did not feel wholly comfortable with matters; it seemed to Piers that that sort of ephemeral casualness, rather an attraction to indifference—he thought—of life on the property that had almost become the parlance of the estate was something that had run its course. At a certain point he began to see less of Basil, often only seeing him in the evenings, when they ate and talked less, and then very little; then each to bed, Piers rising early as always, Basil sleeping late until getting up for the pre-noon lesson: the lessons themselves were becoming unimportant as Basil grew beyond them, a ceremony. One day Basil, his voice deep like a man's, said to his uncle: "Uncle, you know we don't need to do the lessons anymore, don't you?" Piers tried to appear consistent, and he said, "Yes, I know." Piers stared down for a moment, his eyes set in the surprise of what should have been a natural expectation of things: then he shifted himself and turned around to the bookcase and pulled a book down and held it in his hands; he turned around towards Basil and tried to smile widely, and said, "I have this book; it's a new writer. I ordered it for you." Basil said nothing. Then after a moment he loosened up and stepped towards Piers and said, "Thank you Uncle," as the tutor handed it to the student. Piers shifted himself and turned and faced the bookcase, he could not keep the swell of his grief from his face; Basil placed his hand on his uncle's shoulder. Then he walked out.

Again, as it always had: the days passed, the months, the years. . . three years. She stepped out of the sedan, Basil stepped out from the other side. Piers, hunched-over in age but not decrepit, stood behind a tree on the edge of his little stand of pine forest. The footpath had been worn beneath the blanket of needles for a century; it was like the silence in Evan's library, the silence of the back of the ruin, the air filled with an invisible upholstery and a jagged dark must: or perhaps that was his mind and he could not tell between the two. She was wearing a fashionable black coat that dragged the air. The lower hems took small wing. She galloped up the stairs. She was like the wind: no time to be separated from its own hurricanes, to catch them as catch-can. Basil stayed behind. He looked up to the sky, and Piers thought that he didn't need to look up to get there, he was already there. The boy was so tall now, and in such a nice suite. Basil put his hands in his pockets and began to walk slowly, looking now at the ground and now in front of him. Piers could only see the nape of him now. He was all black, black suit—black jacket—black hair. His figure was high and moved in the direction of the formal garden out beyond the house and down the driveway where it ended in brambles and a large oak. He walked straight in and clawed his way through the thorns and the blood red berries and the tangle of the vines. A shot rang out in the sky. "Hey!" cried Piers; then he fell to the ground and sobbed into the dirt. What a terrible gallivant for the dead.

Epilogue



Now the woodlark comes to drink
At my cool and pearly brink
And the lady-fern is bending to kiss my rainbow foam;
And the wild-rose buds entwine
With the dark-leaved bramble vine,
And the centuried oak is green around the bright-eyed squirrel's home.
(31-37, *The Song of a Summer Dream*) Frances Ridley Havergal

Chapter Six

JUDE'S STORY

One—Skeins and Torments



Jude was like a string bean; when he was born, his mother said, "Damien, we have a string bean!" She couldn't gasp, for she was tired; but she laughed a sweet laugh, a laugh that told Damien, "I am happy."

As the months passed she would poke at the boy's toes and pull at his little legs, and say, "they're long little trees, little one." Indeed, the boy had long branchy tree-like

legs, like they might be able to stand tall and blow with the wind.

Jude's father was a machinist. He'd come home with his rough and tender hands and lay little bolts and nuts and screws in the boy's hands just to see what he'd do with them. Generally the boy held them in his hands and closed his little fingers around them, then let them go so that they would cascade to the ground like discarded pets, done with the blissful arrogance of which only little infants are capable. "How about a little brother?" his mother teased him one time. Even though Jude could not yet talk, he put up a firm resistance to the idea by souring his face like a lemon and pursing his lips so that they looked like a dried apricot. "O No No," his mother cooed as if she was ready to whistle, "we're selfish, are we?" "Baahhhh!" was the answer, issued in infantile screech-script. "O No No, little one, that we will have to correct." After a moment she made a small circle of her lips again but lifted her brows high this time and said, "I was just teasing, but perhaps I'll have to think about this more carefully with your father now." The baby struck out at her with his fist. "That will be enough," she said, unequivocally. She took him to his cradle and allowed him to lie on his back and torment the air with his uprooted feet.

The day had never come, he had remained alone with his mother and he knew that his father never bothered her about it. Jude's bones grew quickly and he became

more like a tree each day. His mother fed him enormous amounts of asparagus and other vegetables to keep up with his appetite. His father's shop business went well and he had lots customers and agreements on many of the machine types with local factories. His father was not a retailer but he was a talented technician. It seemed that the retailers saw fit to take advantage of his lack of acumen in one area and the presence of it in another. But it worked out. Jude was very proud of his mother, she was the most beautiful woman in the town and he knew that people thought it. But he knew that she belonged to him and to Papa, more to him than to Papa even. He loved his Papa but his mother was his jewel and what gave him his pride of place in the village. She'd tickle the boy in candy shops, teasing him with doubt, and people would look on and smile. She did it with self-consciousness but she did it for him; he looked so much like a tree that it would have been a certain and stigmatizing topic for people so she gave to her young son pride of place in her eyes when they went out; the people would have been fools to reject it. She'd have taken the scent off of the men, she'd have scavenged the universe of her beauty for its terror and let it alight on gossiping shrews and wives, she'd have pulled out all of the weaponry and armor on young children, fanning their weaknesses to the public with cunning channels.

There were quantities of blood on the floor. Crushed white flesh and flailed arms. Her eyelashes were splayed handsomely though, the un-coroneted skeins of her eyelids dropped half-shut like envelopes for a set of billets-doux: dead staring eyes into the rosy mind, the naughtiness gone and a terrible look of surprise in them.

"Mamma! Mamma!" Jude fell onto his mother and pulled violently at her eyes to wake her up, then sat up and pushed her shoulders into the floor and into the floor and into the floor. A neighbor lady had heard the ruckus and came into the room with eyes for everything. She pulled Jude away, scolding him for such a gross demonstration, and he struck her then threw himself down again to his mother. The shrew called in the other public shrews and Jude was attacked with brooms and batted with sheets and pillows and furniture.

Jude's father never got over this. His shop seemed to have been shut out of the market. In the early days, when they still went into town, children would pull down leaves from the trees and put them on their heads and thumb their noses at Jude and his father, taunting to a degree of cruelty that Jude's father would never understand. He just put his hands over his son's face to blind him and shield him from them, and from the scalding looks on the faces of the mothers and bitched male shopkeepers, hunched over with their chins on their brooms and squinting their eyes through their spectacles and twisting their girl-like little mustaches and pursing their lips like eternal virgins. Then they stopped going to town. Then there was no more money and there were no vegetables on the table; and then his father disappeared one night. Jude ran as fast as he could to the slums, for three days hiding in the day and traveling at night, even in the fields where he crawled into old canvassed bushels of straw until after the sun went down, getting tanned in his fitful sleeps through the day, making his skin and his mind ruddy and magnificent and terrible.

There was no pride of place for Jude in the world that he had entered into now. He had no father here and he had no mother anywhere. And perhaps of

the father it could have been said that there never had been a father, just a man; a man who could only close a child's eyes because he had had to close his own also, with only the power to take care of his own eyes in the end.

Coming out of the seas of bushels on the level plains Jude came upon a set of high fields that grew green grasses and accommodated rodents and birds of prey. Jude came to a blind of trees there, a settled copse; he saw it like he might see a corpse; he made it disappear by making of his hand an un-splayed blinker over his eyes, then changed it and moved on.

He thought he saw a horse in the distance. But it wasn't a horse. It was a man scrambling through the on-come of fences and wire. Jude bent low for a moment and focused on the hulky figure crawling as though a shadow would across the light of the after-dusk; he watched and learned, then went on. He had had to let everything go in order to keep moving; he had had to put away all reasons. At least he could move that way.

There came two scarecrows in the short distance over a meagerly cropped bulge in the land; he let his feet fall forward down the slope, trying not to accumulate too much momentum as he approached, stomping his feet down the slope like a reluctant soldier in a paraded march. Red and blue rags flapped in the breeze around the T-bone straw-men. The strawmen were propped and stuck in the ground of a wide expanse of cabbage fields extending across the basin where they then ran up a new hill at the opposite end. Jude was amazed at the richness and abundance.

He went down onto his knees and pushed his hands into the fallow earth; it was cooler the deeper he plunged. He rested and bent his head down onto his hands and pushed his forehead into the dirt and cried. He picked himself up and dug a head of cabbage out of the ground, a feeling of respite coming over him; he tore the cabbage into a half and two quarters, then he bit at it and ate, and swallowed. He felt a sudden tug at his neck and he got dragged up halfway into a standing position, a large hand pulling his neck like animal scruff; he felt the instantaneous moment of a blow to the back of his head and he went unconscious. The human being who did this let him fall to the ground. His face cascaded into the earth. Even though it could not be said that he was conscious, he felt broken, a recess or an old estuary in his mind contained the raw and desperately sad feelings that he had failed. And in the instantaneousness of the blow he had known, like any other human being, that he had been struck hard; in the moment of it he hoped no one would cut him up like a tree, that he might at least stay without that.

Two—Jude's Dream



They were all in careful calligraphic flowerings of ink and pollen. In Jude's dream they were the lines superimposed on his mother's visage: the lines of Uriel on her brow and the quietly manifest ageing across her whole being. Later he saw his mother with a man, in a pool of viscera and unyielding wet and dug-out earth; she held the man tight and he held her tight, and they stood in a river. The man had kissed her and she had returned it, then it seemed that she was pulling back just at the moment that she threw herself at him and began to cry into his chest; he watched the man comfort her. He was jealous and his salts turned to anger and his anger turned to salts. He held a letter that she had written

for him to keep with him, the instructions of her desires in ink and pollen: a calligraphy of rose buds and two small birds perched on the thin limb of the rendered vine. It might have been then that he fell into the coma that defeated even the most stubborn hallucinations but if it was so it was not as though the dream had ended: even if it had, its final edge was on the other end of the spectrum of things, the edge of time and age and angels.

He spent two years in the cells after the blow on the miserable dunes. Two years of guards, whose faces he had come to know like a tree the presence of its bark. At times they were kind and intelligent, at times they were brutal and stupid. He grew instincts for knowing just which would be coming that day, or at that hour, or in that minute; he tried then failed, and suffered then tried and then had some reprieve whenever it worked. Two years of filth, evil food, and a sundry basket of stomach ailments. Two years of not exercising his body. Two

years of slough with no indulgence. Two years of constant sleep, drowsiness, and short portal views onto a wakeful reality that was stark, wet, ill, and grimy.

A half year after the colonel had arrived at the dark ward of cells Jude was healthy again, able to stretch his lengthened gangly body in the outside air. Then, after that half year, the first person he had seen other than the colonel and the guards and the obsequious runt-fat warden was Bartholomew on the floor being softly prodded by the youthful guard who was pulling at Bartholomew to stand up and walk out of the cell with himself and the colonel and the other guard, who stood watching, bent forward ready to lend a hand. Jude had encouraged Bartholomew with glances of shared age and experience and knowledge as Bartholomew struggled to recognize what was happening, and he experienced a rarity in his personality when he did so; in later years, after he had gone far away to live with the nomads whose existence Bartholomew would later introduce him to at the old ruin through the lore of his own personal experience, he would remember that change, a change that had started to bring him out of himself, the darkness, the death, the blinds, and into an escape to a marginal heaven whose existence he could only have imagined with the idea of his mother at his branchy side, like in the Virgin of the Rocks.

Then, it was the docks, and the truck, and Bartholomew, Piers, and Evan. The properly nomadic form of his life had begun just then, just as the four of them met in the stockyard, each one's arm receiving equivalent pressure from the hands of four different guards; and each one feeling the sweet succor of relief and possibility in the hewn and complicated eyes of the colonel, the kind of fantastic and faerie succor of which only children are capable, a feeling of the gut and the heart, of butterflies in the stomach and in the itching-to-go liveliness of their limbs; and in such unrighteous circumstances, that ability seems otherworldly and sad.

Three — Jude's Epistle, Jude's Lament

O Bartholomew! I thought you died a long long time ago! I'm with the mother now, with the nomads, you remember! You must! O Bartholomew! I miss the ruin! I miss Evan and Piers! The nomad mother is old now, Barthy; she is old now. She is so old she went to the grave twenty years ago, so I am not really with her, but I wanted you to think so, if only for a moment: I'm still very conscious, Barthy. I'm serious. But we took so many journeys: we lived, Barth, we lived. Now, before, and in the after-come: is that where we are now? In the after-come? Ah, I never thought. My old gangly body, dead as my Mamma never could have known about and stayed sane. Do you know what happened to Piers? He listened to everything, you know! I mean during the reconciliations, I heard about him one year when a representative from our people here in the steppes came back from a committee meeting in the northern core; did you know, it's all united now,

it's all one slum! Ha Ha! Piers was there every day as a spectator in the upper rows. He didn't speak to anyone, he just sat up there; I know what he must have been thinking, he had his Piers way of thinking about people, you know? And he's still alive! As old as I! The news carried an item recently, you know, he had become a tutor to the children of a wealthy family way out in the countryside, the man of the house is a person of influence. You see, even in the steppes, the news reaches us! Ha Ha! I don't know what's the matter with me today. It's sunny, and the sky is clean today, it still usually is here. Your friends, the young boys from the nomad mother, were still young enough when I came to them that we could play as children when I went to them, you must have been watching us at the countryside and the library, with Piers and Evan, right, when I left? But I don't know what happened to Evan. I think he probably died. But we'll all always be as old as each other, right? Always! Ah, Barthy! I don't have any hair, you know. Stupid, isn't it? It's been so long that it's been gone, and I still think about the fact that my head is hairless. Did I tell you that I finally had a woman, O Barthy, it was heavenly. The nomad girls are so gentle and sweet, she was the sweetest love to me, and you know, she bore my child! I loved that boy as he grew up, as much as my mother loved me, but he grew up in peace, loved by all, no shrews and shopkeepers, Barthy. I cannot talk about him without crying, Barthy; he wanted more, he didn't realize that more than peace there cannot be anything anywhere equal or better. I wish the newspapers had never come, Barthy. But you're wise, I know you knew they would. You must have. He would have stayed, you know. But the papers print so many things and a boy who's grown up in peace knows so little. Ha ha, I am wise also, I see: It's very rare, Barthy. That's why I've been so happy here. But they're all changed now also, I think I'm the only real nomad here now, how crazy: the word is 'ironic,' right? Well that's what it is, Barthy. It's ironic. Our movements are just symbolic now, we have food delivered to us from the unified city. Barthy, I am serious now. After you died, I changed. We all changed. I saw your face in my mind's eye every day. I saw you with your skullcap on and your sorrowful eyes and drawn lips; you see Barthy, I really am serious now, perhaps you did not think I was capable of it. But I am not judging. I saw your sharp high cheekbones, you have a beautiful nose, did you know that? It's a nose that doesn't know whether it's a pugilist's or an aristocrat's. Barthy, I saw your white shirt with its always pressed collars. I know how you did it, I think I am the only one. But it doesn't matter. Even Piers didn't know, you didn't even need his help for it. I watched you, Bartholomew. Barthy. Barthy. You think I didn't know. I know. You pulled the collars from the dead. And you thought you had gotten away with it. You did. But one person saw it. I was that person. Why did you do it? Did a vampire bite you on the outskirts, before the tunnels and the repeated spot bloodshed? You remember, for all their horror the earth didn't feel blemished by them. Did it become a habit after you stole the skullcap, sorry, after you appropriated it? Did you really find it in the tunnel? Barthy, I loved you, and I still do. But you went too far. And you had time still. Your visits to your parents in the river was more than Piers and Evan made it out to be. I won't ask you why anymore. You did what you had to do. You had to more than any of us. That's why you got old so quickly. That's why I love you most. Anyway, I may go to visit Piers. I think he's in trouble. I love you, Barthy. Goodbye.

Chapter Seven
FROM THE EARLIEST DAY
TO THE EVENING
Sixty Years Later

One — Daddins

Piers said to his father, "Daddins, they'll do what they want to do anyway." "I know Piers. I taught you that." Piers' father knew his son very well. 'So young,' he thought, 'and so wise; wiseacre.'

The two men walked together through the city. One little one, one tall one, two hands joined and flagged in the air by the rhythm of legs and feet. "Don't worry Piers," his father proffered. "I'm worried Papa." "Don't be like your mother." "I am like my mother, Papa," Piers told his father while he giggled at it, knowing that he had come up with a good tease to his Papa. "Yes you are boy, it's true," said his father, assenting to the comedy and the fact. He was a good Papa. Piers had never had another like him, he thought. "I've never had a Papa like you, Papa," Piers told his Papa. "That's right Piers, don't forget it," his father assented again. Then he pulled the boy's arm up a bit to indicate playfulness.

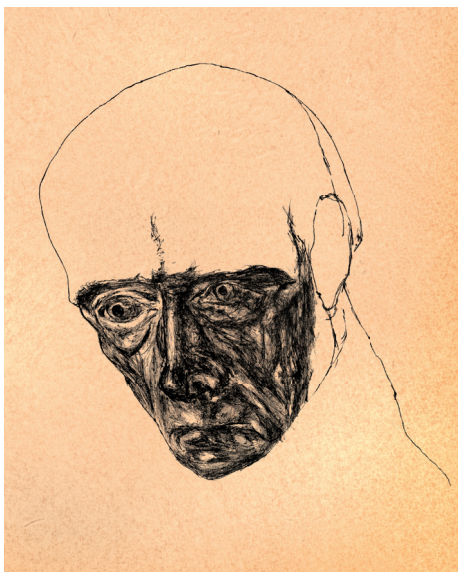
Whenever Piers came home from school his mother had biscuits and sweetcakes waiting for him, laid out at his place at the table where his mother made him feel like a man by putting a giant encyclopedia on the chair which he could set himself on top of. He teased his Mamma by telling her that it made him even shorter because his feet were higher off the floor. "It's not proportionate, Mamma," he teased her. Then she smooched him and smooched him and smooched him and said that she would tell his father on him. "I've already told him what I think about it, Mamma. He said that mothers become silly with boy children and that it's been like that for centuries and that why should our Mommy be any different?" Piers laughed with mirth and surfeit. His mother scolded him with more smooches and he leaned his head into her breast and the full hollow between her shoulder and her arm.

No one had been wrong: 'they' did do what they wanted to do. No sureties were signed, nothing was allowed; they were told to go home, it had been polite,

there had been courtesy, and Piers had looked at the woman with the straight hair with the greatest curiosity as she talked; speaking to his father as though to soothe him. As if to say, 'I am the messenger, I didn't want any of this.' Piers' father bowed to her with greater than formal respect as they left. Piers took one last look at her before his father led him with his arm through the door and out of her office: She just watched them leave, her face seemed placid, and she would give her time to watch them go instead of returning her eyes to her desk and her books and papers. Then he was tripping down the hallway like the little boy that he was as his father held his hand to leave the building and Piers wondered what exactly the woman was doing with her eyes now. He was sure somehow that she would remember them forever and he smiled so big and looked up at his Papa trying to catch his eye, but Daddins would not look down. "Don't tell your mother about her," his father said with an uncanny prescience which Piers was wholly used to and thought was more amusing than amazing; this time Piers did not feel it that way. Then his father looked down at his dearest son, the normally taut skin around this amazing man's eyes crinkled every so slightly with a wave a salt forcing itself on him from his throat and the back of his eyes; his eyes so wide that he thought that his Papa wasn't even aware of it. He was frightened for his Papa, so he said, "No Papa, don't worry, Papa." What Piers meant by his words was saturated with sincerity but still but at the same time it was not even wholly clear to himself what they might mean when thrown out into the world; it seemed that these painful feelings and sentiments became too large for his child's mind, so that in many ways all he could do to salve his confused worries during those moments was to remember the flat hair of the lady and her soothing voice and her placid expression as his father had lead him out of her office; this made him happy again, and he forgot his words and skipped along again within seconds, enough time for his father not to have noticed the revelation of Piers' sadly confused sentiments.

They descended the stairs from the building to the plaza while Piers' father held Piers' arm high with a strong hand while Piers lopped up and down into the air like a rubber ball or a wayward slinky until they got to the bottom. But almost-down Piers' sad sentiments had entered into a candy-cane-like flow of childhood belief in things that adults could not believe in and never even thought about. So he had said to his father as he tried to keep his balance and his lolling pace, "Papa, she'll remember us! You know that! I am certain she was nice!" "You're too wise, boy," replied his father as he lifted his son's arm up for him to skip the last step. "No one's simply nice," his father added after a moment with a furrow in his brow and a greater sternness in his voice than Piers was habituated to; he innocently intimated to himself that his father meant to be strict with him about something about people's moral characteristics, but Piers' attention to that was distracted by what he clearly perceived—as his mind expanded again to the outer boundaries of a child's possibilities—to be a greater speculative seriousness churning in his father's mind separately from any form of strictness to his son. Just then Piers had wanted no more than to jump into his father's arms and kiss and get kissed, but his father had redirected him to his man's chest where he held the boy for a moment then touched his shoulders to indicate that it was time to go.

Two—To Die, to Sleep, and by that



Piers, the universal Custodian



... and Jude,
Alight with flight and prepared to
heal,
Uriel's muse seals immortal relief
For his aged friend and universal
Custodian

As one might expect short shrift was made of everything after that: "Daddins! Mamma! Mamma! Daddins!" They had both turned around to him and had looked at him at the same time, as from the same person, an equal love. It was amazing to Piers to remember it: his father had actually winked at him, his mother had sent him a soft smile, had it been possible? He woke with his head up facing the space projected in front and above the foot of his bed into the dark afternoon light that painted the wall of his small bedroom like the wisps of time and permanence and pine and efflorescence and the angel Uriel's whimsical transport of a disciple to a mentor, or of a mentor to a disciple, on the virgin rocks of a nomadic clan; Jude's eyes were staring down at his, now that his eyes

were facing up as he was able to negotiate another piece of twilight. "Is it you?" Piers seemed unable to conjure such a reality, seemed unable to believe. "Yes, Piers, it's me, Jude, I've come to take care of you, did you know that, you don't need to, we'll be fine. Now go back to sleep. You won't dream, it will be quiet." Then Jude placed his hand over Piers' open and amazed old eyes and the aged custodian fell into a sleep that was truly his. Still what was written in the earth for him was that there had been no sin in age; that the ravens of the earth had been lifted off of his back, and had flown away complaining, driven away by mischief and love and cunning and intellect. And everything was still possible in the world. The grave could still be formed.

Jude had some polite words with the humbled couple of the main house. Piers was laid to rest next to Basil's grave, at the end of a path that had been cleared of brambles to take visitors and friends to the centuried oak and the two tombstones that now stood with it. Evan, who had, somehow, ceased to exist fifty-five years ago, casually passed through and visited his old friend's grave one day. He was wistful as the earth he had relaxed into so many decades ago when his friend had disappeared over the horizon. The mistress of the house saw him loitering, like so many visitors tended to do. She walked up to him and said abruptly, "We don't feed the squirrels," as she threw a stiff arm out to point at a pair of red squirrels scattering themselves around the oak like lovers who had surpassed the Euclidean curves of the poet's Grecian Urn. "Or are they friends of yours?" she asked. Evan looked so young. He smiled at her. "And you must be the lady-fern," he asserted. He walked away and said, "Let's leave it at that." She found him contemptible but wished that she were young for him. She lifted her head as though to say something but he raised his arm without looking back and pulled it down.

January 2009 — April 2009

Postscript: It's a Mandala

It's a Mandala.

The city is one of the major exhibits in the doctrine of Carl Jung. Like a mandala, the city is a symbolic diagram of the human spirit. So Carl Jung remarked in his "Man and His Symbols" that the shallow spirituality in America shows itself in physically and spiritually rundown neighborhoods in the central city populated by rejected classes of people. Compare this, he urges, to the occurrence of palaces in the cities of eastern empire and the spires and towers in some western cities, the alternatives of luxury or high ideal.

I was struck again by the metaphor of the city in "Dhargren" by Samuel R. Delany. Namely, that a nearly psychotic civilization (such as French psychoanalysts claim existed in early modern times) would map out a city hosting a rat race of desperate and pointless existence. Maybe it is a good portent that high rise condos are currently being occupied in the center of my own Grand Rapids.

*Michael J. Burns
Grand Rapids, Michigan
April, 2010*

Expatriate—*Candide*,
Nessum Dorma

Forward

This little novella has no desire or intention to belittle, desecrate, relativize, change, deconstruct, or re-write or re-interpret in any way whatsoever the tenets of Islam, and the spiritual grandeur of its Prophet. By definition and the occasional virtues of a tautology, a sincere approach in the direction opposite is true, as difficult as that may sound as difficult as it may be to show in this novella itself. Therefore I have tried to communicate a *situational comprehension* of a certain *empirical totality* that I came to 'understand' through experience, but transformed into an artistic piece through two main characters, which immediately complicates any academic propositions I could make about what I came to 'understand.' Jack, the American, has a specific past, has specific grievances, has faults, has virtues, contradictions, inconsistencies, and, ultimately, possesses *moral consistencies* that. . . even in the midst of the tragedy and the vicious and unfair words and stereotypes and lies and contradictions and exaggerations and the harsh, gender-and-religiously-bigoted expressions. . . still reflect a greater love and respect for all of mankind than any other character I could have envisaged. I maintain the same opinion on his counterpart, if you will—Ayad—who suffers from a similar disease but is much more on the innocent and humble side of affairs because of the awful things he has seen in his life and the assimilated years of experience he has as an older and more father-like and, yes, wiser man than Jack. All of this not in spite of their mutual situation (i.e. not as a counterweight and/or a solution to all the issues against all odds), but, it might seem ironically, *because* of them, because of the sympathy, the empathy, the strange and intense personal friendship developed—*demands* of them if they are to maintain those characteristics towards each other at all. What I mean to get at by 'empirical totality' is that the limitation of my experience to local and marked sets of experimental conditions (i.e. limited experience), a universe of discourse, if you will, was the only palette which I had to work with to render a reality, any reality, some reality that I could grapple with to some end, to some purpose. Perhaps that's selfish, to grapple with my highly limited experience and therefore risk a misrepresentation, but such is then what I did. In that context I think it is useful for all of us to read the following homily of Saint Isaac, who was born in Bahrain over a thousand years ago. "What is experience? Experience is not that a man who goes and touches things, without acquiring knowledge concerning their advantages and their defects and without remaining with them during a certain time. How often the faces of things give the impressions of defect, whereas within them is found matter full of advantages.

In the same way are to be judged things of the opposite aspect." I need not say more on that count. He said it all for me.

A friend of mine told me about something he had heard at a talk that a priest of the Greek Orthodox Church was giving, as they often do. The priest, citing Isaac the Syrian, said, "It's easier for a man to raise another from the dead than it is for him to know himself." Just for a moment creating a disconnect between the Christian context (to "raise another from the dead") of this statement and the powerful message it communicates, I would like to say that it is with that kind of humility. . . i.e. that I cannot know myself, I, personally, the person who wrote this story, this little novella, I that person would find it harder to know myself than I would to alleviate the sufferings of mankind with a quick and literal wave of my hand. And *that* is how hard it was for my character Jack to know himself, and that's why his contradictions and faults, along with his virtues, bear him out in the end as a person on the side of all of mankind, not a section of it, not a selection of it. The same I must say for myself as the author, i.e. I hardly know myself, so how can I succeed in rendering such a complex situation fictionally or otherwise. (Perhaps western journalists should think about this when they report on events and matters in the Arab world and the Middle East as a whole). And in that setting, the setting of a message of obedience and submission to a greater moral code that dresses down the ego in favor of humility and obedient service towards the spiritual laws of one's God and one's Prophet. . . in that setting and spirit and intention have I written this little novella and do I put it and, in the end, my main characters, out into the world.

I have no desire to muddle in the Rushdie affair or compound or complicate it or to do anything with it, whatever its status may be now. I'm not of that world, nor is my writing, nor is its content, nor is my interest or desire or ambition (and may it always be so). But for the record, for it is relevant here. . . and very much against Rushdie's long opportunistic "fight" for a "team" of martyrs to free speech, where he's the Knight and the Leader. . . I side with le Carré most (I have to side on this, it's too serious not to side), as the most reasoned and sympathetic and human (flawed some of his statements, perhaps, but real in his intentions) voice among Rushdie's early critics not long after the affair began. Unable to resist the relevant extemporaneous, I wish, with respect to the tenets of free speech (because this is relevant here also), that as much laudation that has and remarkably is given still to Rushdie would be given to le Carré, who is a good enough man to confess the necessity of what crass people refer to as "conflicting loyalties." (It's in his books as well.) A conflicting loyalty is like the unconscious, and shining Knights in Armor don't have to contend with such things. A worse attribute cannot be asserted of a man of letters, nor of a man of garb, food, family, a job, and all manner of his desires and needs.

Having said all of this, I have not entered into the baneful world of the Commentariat, of which Rushdie is a member and for which his big bad book carries the virus of talk-talk and negated negations and the nuclear origin of its technical conception for the literary fellowship. I do have to mention it though.

I would like to shut this forward down by saying that a writer is a highly skilled communicator (Joyce said this himself, I am hardly even quoting verbatim), and that because of this he hardly has a right to say anything; which is to say, he doesn't have a right just to say just anything, as Joyce communicated by holding *Finnegans Wake* together. So if our writer is going to say something, and it is true he is inclined to, but he had better be sure then he gets some things right in doing so, because—unless he's James Joyce or Henrik Ibsen or Leo Tolstoy—he's going to get plenty of it wrong in the process. Imagine that I've arranged a meeting between the Hungarian philosopher of literature Lukács, Foucault, Tolstoy, the great Spanish writer Semprun, Joyce and Ibsen and Stendhal and Saul Bellow, and my two characters, all of them, the good, the bad, and the ugly in each of them. Their job would be to alleviate human suffering and to resurrect the dead.

I am not finished yet. I quote from a priest and scholar of the Orthodox Christian faith. "The work of Alexander gave birth to Hellenic civilization. In this amazing crucible, the European inheritance of Classical Greek Civilization was mixed with elements of some of the finest civilizations of Asia and Africa: Iran, India and Egypt." (I will not source this.) Now, because of the iterative distancing and, later, splitting of the Byzantine centre from what became the Roman Patriarchal centre of Orthodox Christianity, we ended up losing this "amazing crucible" and ontogenetic "mix. . . of elements of some of the finest civilizations of Asia and Africa. . . with Classical Greek Civilization," and thus the selfsame loss of the original Apostolic Christian Church with its deep ties with what we now call "Eastern" thoughts, ideologies, rituals, habits, and civilizational viewpoint, and ideas about it. This needn't have happened, but it did. Eventually the iterative process led to a total breakdown, "the schism" between the Byzantine centre of Orthodox Constantinople and Charlemagne's unifying of a Roman and Franco-Germanic center and *Ostmark* of what became the Church of Catholicism. Without judging this with too much self-attribution of the truth, it was unfortunately also a divorce; and civilizational divorces are psychotic and they are enforced, and this one blew up in 1918. And it is within *that* background that my character, Jack, in his own tortured way, tries to explain to my other character, Jack's friend, Ayad. And doing that as late as the 21st Century, imagine a man trying to do that! Because Jack's view is incommensurable with the Eastern-Western thought-divides of today, and his awareness of it is all too perfectly conceived if imperfectly internalized—and in the 21st Century!; of this comes his schismatic and schizophrenic personality and sufferings, and of this comes the—his—nay, *our*—profanity, excess, stereotyping, epithets, violations, and ultimately payments made and tragedy.

On a rare and almost impossible to obtain recording of another "talk" given by a Greek Orthodox priest some years ago, perhaps a decade or more ago, an equally rare and impossible thought was expressed. The priest said, "I am a threat to no one, no one is a threat to me." I believe my character would have been a silent practitioner of this—meditating on this thought you may find it to be true of your present situation at any time, in the crux of any particular moment. It is not spiritual dialogues that need to take place between the "East" and the "West" in today's world, for we have too much in common to require

such a blasé and indulgent category to come to our rescue. We need friendships between men of the two faiths: Christian and Muslim. We need men who are honestly able to say to themselves, "I am a threat to no one, no one is a threat to me."

I am saving the best for last. My Jack-Ayad friendship and their dual and just hardly skewed dead-ringer tragedies is the tragedy of Tolstoy's Hadji Murad. But, really?

The Author

Expatriate—*Candide*

One

THE BOOK OF EARLY

“riverrun, past Eve and Adam’s”

The etiquette of Adam, and its disgrace. Like the Judaic Old Testament, Islam is a pre-existing form of worship to God, for whom Mohammed came later as its Prophet; and in this likeness all the way back to the Murids in the Caucasus and beyond, modern Islam has rejected Adam’s disgrace as an abomination, as a foreshadowing of Bolshevism and the radicalization of the merchant class. That rejection is *pure* and under the right circumstances can declare itself *Absolute*—no matter which of the silo-creeds of the ramified human mythos that came before those foreshadowed gargoyles. I saw that rejection as a flower blooming in the desert for hundreds of years in its un-forlorn splendor and ricocheted gladness in the hour that I first saw and then later conversed with Ayad. That un-blemished and inimitable splendor and gladness were in his eyes then, twinkling with mischief and tenderness and sophistication and learning and experience, while my eyes had lost almost all of that, denuded and grayed and sallow as the cultural gout I carried around with me constantly—but which I had learned to live with, which set me apart by the very fact that I knew it and had taken my measure of action in response to it; these lovely pupa of the sun, you see, were in his eyes and it, they were growing up quickly to be everlasting moths. Ayad’s eyes were fourteen hundred years old when I met him, older than mine, older than ours. Because unlike mine and ours, they had been sequestered all throughout the eras; and Mecca a small prayer away, always the salving grist for the mills of the heart and the mind, and its pilgrimage just a hop, skip, and a jump away. My eyes had been scattered to the winds by secular and cultic Diasporas since the Schism: since then, all orbits of meaning had devolved to the cultic-secular, to the Papal tyranny of man over man, to the Godless Protestants who were it not for their murderous pick-axes and hoes and other weapons of the barn may have been able to save themselves from an eviction from history. And I having been baptized Episcopalian, an iron-clad rupture; I, then having

been raised and formed by those psychotic breeds. Just so with Jack, in the very image of children living in a society where polio and influenza and jaundice and tuberculosis and disease by spirochetes and immune deficiencies would be accepted and viewed as normal as apple pie and heart-attacks. So faded and jaundiced with a yellow mask, our eyes had not been protected. If our eyes tried to see the truth while in Ayad's land there was a risk that we would see too much of the truth, and get blinded, by the glare of Medusa or the hubris of Oedipus. Jack dared, dared to speak it to the Man, the Boss, the Roman, the Anglo-Saxons and the Americans, right there and then in that land. His words were neither minced nor indirect. He paid.

When Ayad first saw Jack his gut must have fallen just as his spirit rose to a level of empathy for him. Jack was not an open book to his own kind, but with the thoughts that he had been harboring, I wish I could have informed both of them about the nature of those thoughts, the old and enduring murderous logic of it; so that I may have saved them from their bicameral fates, the one man's end the dead-ringer of the other's. Yes, in that horror. The dead-ringers, the single eye stuck between them like on a piece of American currency. This American expatriate, you see, Ayad could read him. Things moved quickly with them, as it happens in predestination. But there was a worry that ticked quietly in the back of Ayad's mind, and I wonder how much of it he had to suppress to keep going with Jack, to keep the electrical and foster-parent charge of the man in tact and nourishing; but a worry, maybe even but for a worry: that things might churn too far in a way that Ayad might not be able to convert them into things familiar to him, or if not to him, because of his hard-won enlightenment and a natural sincerity about the man, then to his society, which could be like a very close room even as it reckoned with its greatness and its Prophet and peered into virtue's infinities. Ayad didn't live long enough to find out that things would churn too far but also and critically in a way that would not only consume his society's amassment of moral understanding, but the world's.

During their first meeting, when Ayad gave Jack a ride from their place of work to the Compound where Jack was temporarily residing almost two hundred kilometers south, Jack had appeared disshelved and a little manic and scared; he seemed to Ayad not to be aware of himself, to be looking out of a glass window where he was registering only the movement of his eyes, one continuous movement, without stop since he could remember as a child fortified up by his toys in the ash of the fireplace at his parents' upper-middle-class ranch house in Oak Creek. But then, quite soon and quickly, he began to talk as the car cruised and Ayad kept his hands on the wheel and the gas, to talk on and on to Ayad for a full half-hour as Ayad shuttled the SUV down what journalists, contractors, and military personnel call the most dangerous highway in the world.

Jack told Ayad then that modern stupidity was the great evil in the world, that it could be counted on to wreck the whole tradition, all of the historical ties and break-offs between the Persian, the Arabic, and the Byzantine-Constantine traditions, as he saw them. Ayad sat and listened in his large SUV that he had just purchased, and which he was very proud of at the time. He had seen too much of the world to be surprised very often; he had acted as the translator-

interpreter for an American colonel during the first Gulf War, and he had seen some terrible things during that period. He had worked in a bank in Florida and loved America for what it wasn't in his part of the world but which he knew and valued for what it was for many other people in other parts. He belonged to an older generation that could not be persuaded by the youth and the new Mullahs and the fanatic in-fighting Princes, all of whom he considered, in the deepest private chambers of his brother's house, with only his closest family members as members of a silent but reachable and somber audience, only to them— to be 'self-fascinated,' as he termed them; feeling his age at times when he did this, embittered then resigned to his materialism even as his family and especially his brother Mohammed listened with sympathy; the very idea of his Prophet, in so many respects, having been appropriated by the 'self-fascinated'; but his sadness could be as remote as the sadness a poppy might feel when the sun wasn't up.

But such openness from an American in the land where they had both found each other thrown together by fortune or otherwise, such openness, this surprised Ayad, and put his usually mellow if occasionally comically manic mind on alert. He tried to find a way to answer Jack; therefore, and in spite of it: 'There are many things, Jack,' he said. He thought it might be simple: he thought it could be, but he knew that he was probably wrong and that it probably wasn't. Ayad was a sophisticated man and spoke English more fluently than most native speakers, although his idioms were strong and recognizable to an outsider if the outsider had ears for his words at all. 'These things are different, Ayad,' Jack said: 'There's no way out of this one—' Jack finished it off, 'it,' an 'it,' in his mind, and in the scary part of it all: in the world; with that Jack said no more and they continued driving. Ayad knew right then that he had a new charge on his hands. He accepted this without inner-complaint as a given that he take care of as best as he could. Ayad said a few minutes later, with the cars humming and zooming ahead of them and behind them like beat-up jets on wheels: 'Jack, if you need a place to stay when you are tired from your driving, you may stay at my brother's house. It is about three-quarters of the distance between work and your apartment, starting from work. It can save you the last leg of the trip when you are very tired, and perhaps, even, when you need someone to talk to. My brother is a good conversationalist. Talking is not unreasonable. He has to listen to me all the time,' Ayad said finally, trying to adduce humor to the sensitivity of the offer and to the situation as a whole. 'And, he is discrete,' Ayad added at last. Jack seemed embarrassed yet he was very flattered but seemed to be otherwise unreachable. But this branch of Ayad's was a long branch, and Jack knew it was, he was not stupid in this thing: it was an allowed stretch of the land's etiquette, but still a stretch. 'Thank you Ayad,' he said: 'That is very kind of you—' Jack paused and then with a smile that seemed to overcome his embarrassment, said: 'I hope you've asked your brother and his wife about it!' 'No my friend, you do not have to worry about that! You only need to arrive and you will be welcomed,' Ayad concluded with the mellowing ambience in his voice. Jack had not known how hungry he had been for that ambience: at that moment he released himself from his inner prison: he threw his hand out the window and let it get blown by the force of the air. Ayad smiled between his well-kept and graying beard, and his still-young and mischievous eyes twinkled a little as they always did

when he seemed to have brought a moment or more of gratification to others and so also to himself. But if there was any man in the world who was aware of consequences, it was Ayad. He hadn't forgotten the things he had seen in his life: not the vast corridor of incinerated Iraqi bodies and blown out tanks and scorched trucks, melted metal into sand like spectacles, and later the radiation-resistant mopsuits taking in blown out tanks at the port. But he attributed no ill-intent whatsoever to Jack. He was sure of him. He took it at that and let it fall into its quiet place among so many other quiet pools and oases in his life; yes, so powerful was this dispensation.

As they drove the desert still surrounded them, at least for Jack it was a surrounding. Jack knew he was all alone in this land of vast desert. The boundaries between places that had been civilized and the grand extent of what would always be pure desert and swaths of raucous and pitiless waste in the aftermath of another international war of the willing, created an unditchable feeling of claustrophobia in him. Life seemed so early but it seemed to be getting late for him, he felt as he realized this; it could have been Flanders here, a Dutch farmer carrying an American wanderer or passing traveler through the countryside on a horse-drawn cart just several years after the end of the Great War; but it wasn't, the world did not see it that way, the television networks did not see it that way, no one did, it was a lone thought; a strange feeling, a schizoid sense of disorientation and an infusion of light came over him, and then darkness, and he had to shut his eyes and then he just closed them hard and kept them like that and let the blackness and the patterns of colors overpower him so that he might lose himself even further. Even in that haze though he realized at that moment that all of this that was going on right then was not part of the general stupidity of the world, it was not stupid at all. They, he and his thoughts and Ayad and whatever his thoughts might be, had been separated off from it, if at least for an hour and a half, like astronauts cruising in a silo. So he held his stomach and looked over at Ayad for redemption. Ayad responded both to the need and to the request: 'It's okay, Jack. Everything will be fine, you'll see,' said Ayad in the sophistication of his soul-reading abilities: 'You can rest, put your head back and sleep. I'll take care of the driving,' he told him in the familiar American idiom. Jack felt the tenderness he needed like he felt it when he had needed to put his face into his mother's skirts and be held by her: he felt protected by Ayad right now, at least for these minutes, these partial hours in the car. Then he put his head back and closed his eyes: the cars zoomed ahead of them and behind them like broken jets and the vibration and the noise put him to sleep as he converted the vibration and the noise into the Brandenburg Concerto, as he had been apt to musical delusions since he was a child; and then passed out immediately into a sudden deep sleep in a moment of epileptic joy—just as though he had needed the heroine in his veins and had gotten it. Ayad drove on and on. He held onto the wheel and wondered.

Outside the offices near the doors during a break smoking one sultry afternoon Jack said to one of the funny-men in their group, an American like him: "You have the etiquette of Adam in your blood. You've learned nothing from your religion. That's why they hate you," Jack said then pausing—"Like most necessary stains." Jack felt like a wounded wolf who was allowed all forms of

attack, that 'everything goes' and that he'd do it, like no one ever had before. He felt power, inimitable, coarse, refined, knife and bludgeon.

"What the *fuck* are you talking about?" asked the funny-man.

"That's exactly it again," said Jack, feeling IT: "You don't even want to know what they're talking about. You cut it up with droll humor all day in front of everyone, you're a total fuck-up. That's why Ayad warned you today to be careful of what you say, he was trying to extend his hand for a moment even for a freak like you. You're a fuck-head and your lucky, did you know that?"

"You know what Jack? Why don't you just put on a dress like them. Then you can squat when you piss. You're an Al Qaeda type anyway. Like Lindh. Go for it. See you on CNN."

The funny American put his cigarette out and turned around to the group of others and started having fun again.

"You're late." That had been John, a small peevish British upstart man who had made it here but had not and never could at home. (There were many like that, Americans, Brits and Canadians, as natural tyrants they were in their element here, a jewel in the crown; the Aussies and the South Africans, not having received such jewels by a three hundred year old but organized twist of fate, did not take part in the tyrannical muck-circles: some were almost decent, one South African, Nick, had been ineluctably decent and did not troll Jack, but welcomed him into his larger social world for a period, when it ended because Jack could not keep it up but still took the memory and kindness to heart.)

"I'm nearly after death John. I was forced off the road and I almost crashed out. So *fuck* you." One hundred and eighty kilometers with a dozen check points one of the most dangerous roads in the world, at high speeds, was enough in itself to crush the small British peeve and do so without regret, with no thought for regret, with no thought to anything except total destruction and apocalypse. But he was a roach, and roaches don't crush easily. Jack loathed the freak in all of this.

"When your deliverables are finished Jack you're outa here. I'm not extending you. And don't be late again." That was it from the freak. He's still around, I saw him last month hanging on like a mite to his bosses, serving, the servant, forever, unto death, serving the servant, unto the death of him.

Later that week as a passenger in Ayad's new SUV on their way to a different office, Jack had tried to explain to Ayad that in the ancient world, stupidity was confined to the demotic mind because it was not capable of understanding the dialectic, the Platonic, and that this was the source of the stupidity of the Kings and of the Pharaohs.

Ayad did not know who Stendhal and Ibsen and Joyce were, but Jack tried to explain why they were the first and the last of those in the Western traditions to recognize modern stupidity as the worst destroyer in the history of mankind. There had been a time, Jack told Ayad, when despite the battles and the subjugation of the defeated and the sublimation of the victorious, despite all of this, men were one, of one kind, of many skins and kin, but one. Ayad had to smile, but he found he had to believe, to his almost grave astonishment. Ayad became aware that Jack was aware in a way that other men were not; whether

he was right or not about his intellections and conclusions, it was the awareness, the absolute awareness that the man seemed to be demonstrating, that tipped Ayad that extra bit in belief, quiet astonishment, and the sympathetic joy in the presence of one good man who has recognized a second. If these things had been said by a man in any other part of the world, Ayad could have let them go as the remarks of a crank or a fanatic, or even an academic dropout from one of the American universities. But hearing them here, on the same business errand together, partners in that sense, and the unabashed frankness of the other in the whole picture of their dual situation, that was something different. 'Here' was the cradle of civilization; the 'business' was the gun, which was equal to oil and an octopus of power and finance and slavery and death; the 'unabashed frankness' was the total departure from topics of business or anything remotely related; their 'dual situation' was the fact that they were in the same car often and that the one had let the other take care of him, and the other had said yes, yes it's my pleasure.

Two

SUN UNBOUND

Dust (carriage, lights → camera Bobby Brown faggot spindle-assed Hollywood deceptors, universal losers, come here into my world, come here): Perspiration (leaking, not leaking, sperming the planet in the legerdemains of the New York Times with the addle-minded fetish of squander. Come here, yon Journalist, yon Writer, come here into my world). Sun. Sun now. Sun now unbound and ricocheted across a region on a planet: a spray of light over the rooftops. And we are asleep in North America. But not I, no not I the uniman. 'Nor am I here to help you,' he informs. You see they killed his America, he informs, 'nor am I here to help you,' he informs. They littered the earth with depleted uranium, he informs, and gave it a nice little certificate, he informs. How could they possibly take care of mine? he declares. 'Nor am I here to help you,' he informs.

Jack entered the Compound with his car. The guards were soldiers of the state apparatus; their uniforms were pathetic and looked more like guerilla uniforms than uniforms for a professional state army. The soldiers waved him through, they knew him and he kept on friendly terms with them, brought them forbidden consumer goods and consumer information: pornography, alcohol, and addresses on the near island state where prostitutes could be found in the hundreds, from Russia, Thailand, Vietnam, Ukraine, all of Eastern Europe, from all nations and peoples of Central and South Asia; where Indian and Pakistani boys could be had cheaply. The risks were enormous for him, the punishment, no matter how harsh, would never be enough to satisfy the religious police. Therefore, no mirrors ever went under his car. The boy-guards were as morally naked as he was. He had a certain respect for their daring, their naïve stupidity: because his stupidity was not naïve, it was highly informed, so his respect for his sort of daring was different, a consciously driven but silently channeled bravado that he had become consciously saturated with while feeling none of the pleasing or even the unpleasing satieties of naturally occurring surfeits. The main thing he hated about his naïve boy-guards were their girl-like mustaches, otherwise the boys passed for him, he would have been happy to have a drink with them on the nearby island state and watch them drink 'till after an unimaginably small amount of consumption they became slobs and vulgar nukes against their own creed and religion. When he saw their type walking on the promenades of the heathen golden-calf hotels he'd let them talk him up in their slurred speech and enhanced feelings of brotherly relations with mankind; usually he'd be with a friend like Bill or Jim; he'd whisper in one of their ears, "Get a load of these little nukes. Gotta give it to them." His speech had become more perfected over time, he rarely contracted his verbs or nouns as he used to: he had become civilized

under the influence of the whole muck. Ayad's death, along with the word which was his name, had been replaced with exactly that which the death had caused in Jack: devastation, a nuclear wilderness; a man who had become an aggressive, radiating sarcophagus in his very self, his own Chernobyl. Nothing worse can happen to a man—except for the Russian helicopter pilots trying to extinguish the flames of the real one, the sentience of hell on earth.

Turning the wheel of his car into the cull de sac where his cement house stood at the end of it, he eyed Miriam crossing to who knew where on the black Compound pavement and as her eyes fled away from his in fear of him he began to laugh inside the air-conditioned car.

"Dumb stupid poor white Kansas bitch—" he lamented with a hearty laugh.

"Why don't you just sell her asshole?" he had asked Jim, who was one of his few friends. He had been joking with Jim and was in one of his better moods, but his friend felt obliged to set the whole thing in context: "She's my wife, and she's not Filipino; born in Kansas, Jack."

"I'm just sheeettin' you Jeeem," he said with a laugh mocking the Filipino accent; he took aim at the white ball and shot. If Jim had not been his friend he would have jeered at him though, Jim's kind of weakness in other men revolted him.

Jim put his in, for all it might be worth but which he knew was probably not. "You're always just shittin' me Jack. I wish you'd stop it."

"No chance of that," Jack maintained, taking aim.

"I didn't think so," his friend said as if the whole thing were in the past tense now and as Jack smiled at those very words and shot. It was a mild concession on both sides even with that though.

Three THE BEDROOM

That night, sitting alone in his cement house contemplating into his own only partly beloved nowhere-ness and otherness; his thoughts were in a procession. 'When you're forty with that—' he thought to himself— then paused in mid-drift and finished it off—"it snows—" he stopped; he had turned forty and he had a thought which he had wanted to finish off, to obtain 'closure' on, as the psychs might say; he was amazed at how many people he had swindled in life. He ruminated on it with a deviant form of pride that made him tip his head to one side when he felt the thrill of it. And smiled.

He kicked his shoe across the room away from the bed, the cessation of its movement was marked by the thump it made against the wall barren of any sign of bass, just a condensed and immediately concluded clunk. The room was very dark, the blinds had been pulled and folded completely. He smoked. He forced the ashes to the floor every several seconds. After three of his relished cigarettes had been burnt and exhausted so that they had died, she walked into the room and pulled her top off, apparently he had left the front door open for her as usual, apparently so; then the light followed her in like a coven and let in on her arms first and then cut down the rest of her. She had no feeling for the fact of his presence. He kicked another shoe. It flew through the air and hit her in her shin. She made a noise that indicated pain and then finished off and went out. She left the aura of the coven in the room for him to have fun with, she had let it fall as though a pheromone would fall from her.

Bill still hadn't arrived back from the States. He had been due back for weeks and absolutely no word had been heard from him.

"I stay here with the Thobes Bill. Americans just be the same— they in America you don't know that? You American. You go but I stay here Bill. Thobes in Kingdom and Americans in Kingdom I used to them. I no want my Americans to be new Thobes for me."

That had been Bill's endgame in more than one sense; derived of a single decision made fifteen years ago; a mailorder Filipino to be delivered safe and solid to the Compound (which could not be done today, any liberal dispensations that the Kingdom might have made possible in the past had been killed off by the rise of the mullahs with the astro-figures of youth unemployment and state dole); this mailorder Filipino then held onto in debased and mucked luxury for fifteen years and foolishly impregnated. Jack had urged Bill to abortion outside of the Kingdom; but Bill had become too accustomed to the nightly sex and that kind of sex—nuptials desired in the bargain or not, which in any case was a form of sexual blackmail in Filipino culture in Jack's view—was a rare and

precious resource in the Kingdom, and she would never have sex with him again if he forced her onto an abortion table. The coarser but deeper vein, the aorta of the whole arrangement, being that the petrol Kingdom itself held onto the white expatriates for as long as it could in the same way. Serve the servant he had thought so many times in mental states that varied from enlightened amusement to disgust with both of those items. It was a cycle that fed on itself in him: sadism, and contrition for that sadism—later mocked but not rejected. That is the sinner's covenant, his truth.

Even so and not in spite of that he was saddened that Bill—in all of his fantastic perversity and sadism in other circumstances—had been Fool to the Filipino in the end. To him she was like the office muck and blood strife that he and Bill, and sometimes Jim, would carry home in bags from the office and show off at their yellowskinned Compound cocktail parties. She was nothing more than that. Something to be hated and destroyed only—like her opposite number in every sense except one: Miriam.

Then he thought of the robed ones, the Flipo's designated protectors, protectors of the migrant selfish beneficiary, her evil incumbency, her worship of the Ones: And they call you by name: both the yellow-skinned sperm-obsessed heterosexual fag-lilies and the ritual giants who'd score you like you were made for chiseling the work-product as a whore were only:

Then the Indian walks in with the Turkish coffee and mineral water and the indication from the lazy but employed American in his comfortable servant's chair, he almost winks at you as he casually gets up and pays his respects and then says good day: the indication is that you have to leave the room—that poor mother fucking Indian, he's in for a plugger and he knows it, he is actually no more than a boy, his eyes are weeping, and he will not look up at me. And the white expats who have grade-code trade-offs and payoffs from old inter-and-same-racial blood feuds, play right along: faggot and intrigue. That's why the whole idea of bringing them back home is so frightening. They're likely to move to Sacramento and become serial killers, the new yellow-skinned Hillside rapists and stranglers who get starved for the kill that came routinely in their air-conditioned Frigidaire compounds and the office muck and blood strife that they could carry home in bags and show off at their yellow-skinned cocktail parties, thereby disseminating for further use in ways that only they know about. Yes, this is the mixing of a hubristic dependence on oil from a warring religious clan, tribe and cult, that means the whole monolithic can of garbage there, and the financially motivated collusion of a sectarian and mentally ill expatriate subculture living in that land and assisting that clan, tribe and cult—it's material for Johnny Cash to lament, although he is dead now, and for Nine Inch Nails or The Red Hot Chili Peppers to howl and scrape at. Actually the thought of what Johnny Cash would have thought had he known is very disturbing to me— *he thought*, but then: what of the roe oak! the good ground, the lyric responses to a devastated male ego—and the adult scapegoating of young adults (>>>!!!“teenagers”) for the bad behavior of adults in our own land (smoke crack, steal awards, steal assets, steal cash, steal organs, steal the future; DUI, hit-city run-city, adultery-city. *he thinks*— I do not know how Johnny Cash would have dealt the multiple intersections. I am dealing with it for him. Where to go from

here— *he thought*: The limp taste of vodka in my mouth, I struggle to proffer the possibility. With alcohol life becomes a flat abstraction, meandering with a willy-nilly thumbing-at-your-nose to all of the perspectives offered up by man, as with one of Franz Kline's Black & White abstractions painted out on newspaper. How did I start *this* newspaper— *he imagined*, (*he spermed the NYT not the YMCA that had a real home, fuck the other*): with ruthlessness. how will it end: as all things end, it will die. I am doing these absolutes, he thinks, for my nation, for my country, for my people, for myself—but not for humanity, that is one abstraction that is ruled out by working with absolutes. we do have a country that has not yet been completely hijacked by the collusionist runts and vulcans of an international order that seeks to make America one big Sacramento or Portland stalked by serial killers and Hillside stranglers. this newspaper *he thinks* this newspaper this newspaper my diaries! my notes! Never never never to be arranged for literary purposes. . . bastards!bastards!bastards! so, they will be privately expressed in a von Clausewitzian Biblical toll the brun nburn fire of them mhy *notes!* my *ingressions!* my *single ingressed horde!* to the ancient warring mortals come again like Lazarus from the dead, and I will tell you,—*he says*: we have an approaching archipelago to deal with, like a broken up meteor screaming across the earth or a giant and menacing iceberg beyond the technical devices of man, that's the true headline bastards!

Jack shifts himself on the bed and grabs a pencil from the nightstand, scraping then underneath the bed for some papers to write on. He is thinking and we don't know what it was but we can guess. He writes in a state of *furor scribendi*—

"And they the self-fascinated expatriate yellowed men tell it with a lust of self-fascination in their eyes, their eyes leaking with the tears of the ecstasy of telling their secrets, and then telling more, since generalization and gossip is their wretched conversational mix, as if they were speaking from the 'scientific medical tenets' out of the Quran (which they aren't): that men's sperm leaks throughout the day and night in men with work related diabetes, whatever that might be, and that it is one of the unspoken great medical problems for men, that these men have to wear tampons. And then the little fucking native Shiite who wears jeans instead of the Thobe, complaining of the official discrimination against him as he smokes a cigarette with you on the balcony outside the office. He is about the only sane one around. He is a smart programmer who takes no shit from anyone, who has nothing to lose because his grade-level in the company is permanently frozen by an edict of the King declaring such permanent freezes for non-Sunni Muslim Saudi citizens. He keeps to himself while the rest of the Sunni Bosses fight for status in small clan-like groups that collectively have influence with the Big Sunni Bosses in the company. My friend stays to himself, does not lie to me, does not say I am his friend, and expects nothing. Those who call you 'my friend' you want to watch out for. They are the political buttfuckers. They are the ones who will use you to get the work product, when they are sure it is finished and they have understood the coding, and then claim it as their own and smear your reputation that never even existed in any case, since you are a non-entity infidel there, but smear they do anyway: they're the runts, the stupidest of the horde. 'Yes, sure, no

problem. Whatever you need. I give you what you want. You are my friend. I trust you.' And they call you by name."

He fell back on the bed and held his head in his hands staring up at the ceiling and feeling the whole coven screaming in the audible silence. But his eyes were shutting. He knew he'd not die right there and then and never get up again. Up he'd get again as always. He convulsed Bach divine and slept deep and flailing arms and head across the bed in convulsive shocks in the deep deep sleep *petit lily temple mal sexed underpants* from his Fraulein great grandmother. (Real Stone Cold Thoughts For A MAN.)

Four

How Far Can A Man Go?

That morning Jack started on his usual muck drive to the offices: The Indian at the desolate desert muck petrol station who eyed him every morning, the short one, stolidly petit; the arrogantly silent, The One; his childishly conniving little peepers peeping out at him from between his half-flat-half-rotund forehead and the desert scarf covering his mouth and nose and wrapped around the front and back of his neck and collar bones up onto his skull maybe even into it; he was a special creature: passive, thoughtful, altogether dumb but not stupid: cunning, worth a thousand Buddhas. He always dumbfounded Jack, every day; every morning Jack felt the shyness in the power attributed to the color of his skin exposed, made naked; recklessly he sometimes thought—in moments of caffeine-induced redemption waiting with his hands on the wheel of his beast—that that power had been put there by another mind as a counterweight to its potential for predation (to keep him down, to suppress the rapacity of the central 'T' he had to carry in that world, that region, and whose presence there he knew was an act of spiritual and territorial violation of another people and a materially divergent history).

That evening he sat alone on the side of his bed killing cigarettes. He was looking at his nowhereness, his otherness again, his otherness from the yellowskinned cocktail crowd and the riotous younger compound expatriate dwellers and the pathetic band of olderskinned ones who hung onto the riotous young as the grieved and envious old will.

But his thoughts were paramount to him right now.

'They have learned everything about us—' his thoughts were in a procession now— 'because they have nothing to learn from us.' The procession began to race: 'They listen to us, each day, filling up our tanks (before us there were others like us, and after us there are always more). my Little One himself has a sense of permanence there, in a foreign desert on the greased cement grounds— a sense of responsibility that we will never understand— which he and his brothers carried with them from the sub-continent. Then we drive onto the greased cement grounds where they pump the gas and take our signatures every day— and their outdoor beds under the desert sky— and inside the garages that you can look straight at but you can't see into inside: the indoor shade is darkness against the morning light in the desert— and we sit at our steering wheels waiting. he looks at me. he is again— passive— thoughtful— dumb— not stupid. he understands my carceral stage in life— he sees— but does not care— he is unconscious— he is conscious that it is not my life it is human life— and he is not conscious of it— he just is— and he understands human to mean something different. How far can a man go?'

Jack awoke in a gasp of fear just as though directly from a dream. He looked around him and there was nothing around his bed except muck— nothing.

Five

Natalya and the Indian

In the morning Jack braced for the drive: Convulsions, Bach unbelievable divine, he was in a good mood, he was on his high arc, the manic rev, the verve, the one that took him out of himself, always when he needed it. Brace for the drive: 180 kilometers: essential, daily essential blood travel: throughpoints: Island of Solace this morning, Natalya with him in the morning, start point the apartment suite leaving her in the covers, Indians waking from their shanty shelters, the Causeway from the Island of solace, the near island, transcending the natural water-locking between the Island and the Kingdom, Al-city after al-city (rig what, which well he laughed?), bypass sign to Mar Somna (restaurant of grief, the Indians standing soul-bear after sleep in the desert waste serving you petrol for your drive-beast, the little one with the beady eyes who never takes his beady eyes off you every fucking morning and wears a battered head-scarf like an old bag woman and seems to enjoy every single moment of it), then long waste yellow haul to Ma Jupin, land of chemical waste and industrial secret police. Still The Happy Checkpoints! he laughs, gone divine again, Bach unbelievable (dead dogs, dead Indians carrion swiped throat-out for immediate Karma points by the Madmax insane speeds of the hooded drivers of the beaten Fords and Chevys: permanent road-kill): armored vehicles, 21mm barrel pointing at your company-on-loan Grand Marquis (this car will kick any ass on the road, and he laughs), the SUVs with the third-eye of the religious police painted menacingly on the door: you answer their questions and smile, they say 'Go!' They the religious police— he thinks— in the offices gallivanting like alligators— they tell you— he says to himself— they tell you that the Jews orchestrated the devaluation of the German currency— they don't call it the Deutsche mark, they're too ignoramus— to arrange for their own Holocaust to get the world to give them Palestine. You have a different opinion— he says to himself, he tells them: The Beatles were a Soviet laboratory invention inserted into Liverpool as a launch pad. Well in fact, whoever invented John Lennon, he thought, the Great 20th Century Messiah to spread his message, whoever: which he did, aptly and with love, he thought. Then, at the end of the day, Natalya is waiting for him, he has got the place for the whole week, and he returns to her, her Ukrainian island of solace and "Jauck Jauck Jauck, it will be fine Jauck" as she strokes him and caresses him, and crossing the Causeway— under which human and livestock bodies and barrels and all other sundry muck and discarded flotsam, float for hundreds of kilometers in the deep and constant trade currents— and he says out loud into the air blasting into his car, he says my mind is still peering backwards to the Kingdom, brace for forgetfulness of tomorrow and today, for the drive back: 180 kilometers, enough petrol to last you until forever never comes the

next blood morning for desert squall and land-haul and Indian Indian Indian—the restaurant of grief avoids your awareness he thinks at least for tonight, the daily essential blood sample is wearing you thin good because it's less blood at least refill tonight in your dreams and with Natalya and maybe a closed-door dinner with like-minded friends on the enclave island to which you return—he shouts out into the unairconditioned air—the circulating chaos of the blasting gulf sand shoal winds into the car all windows down, he shouts like baby to mamma and he shouts mamma says 'Cross that beautiful bridge Boy! Cross it now Boy! Save your Soul! Give it to Jesus!'—then he shouts at the top of his lungs and turns his head into the air flowing in blowing his cheeks like flaps I'm gone over ecstasy from mamma's words and the Gulf is blue and beautiful beneath me! and he's happy for a happy 30 minutes, and he flies and puts his arm out and he grabs at the salt air and he hungers for Natalya's touch and is satiated because she is both waiting for him and cuming with him. He imagines the bridge the Causeway is all the way to the States, and laughs And now there is death. I am back, repatriated to the Homeland: O Death-port: I walk up into the back mountain behind my home, the silence is deafening, a glass of wine breaks in my hand, I look up at the trees on the mountain and I say they are the grown ups. I say: Insanity! Death-port! I say, 'I want to lie here for eons be gone with speculation'—about what I am—no more speculation about the species. Just eons with adults, the grown ups that are growing my sight into my head like branches night branches blurred all the fuck they know just eons with them I!—Want!—That! But that, my man, is a memory of the Indians and the highways. It is not real. I can grab at the air still, the salt air, I can still fly, I will be able to fly forever. Be gone, be gone: What was it that was in that land anyway? Pimps of a religion, pimps of an industry, and the prostitutes of both.

That day Jack had desired Natalya more than usual; that day in the muck offices he had finally attained a more complete awareness of the whole fat muck of the arrangement of foreignness in that land, the whole psychosomatic roadkill of the total arrangement there—expatriates, mullahs, their angry young men—in the mosque, out of the mosque, always pure but often evil—the company dog warlords, the two sects, his two best friends, their two wives, everything, the whole moral muck of it.

He had just finished off a couple of cigarettes with the Aussies and a section of the white South African Diaspora; there was the fattish boly faced Belgian there, a man with a Green Card and an American wife and children back in Texas and he's banging a dozen Thai girls every night in his apartment on the island of solace; his American hanger-on the old partially gruff partially hang-dog overweight middle-aged man getting the same meat and cheating on people whose birth-soil he actually shared.

Jack had grown sick of these people, their grandiose sense of professional victimization because they had such fine and tuned intellects, their speech and sultry minds and their reckless self-pity. They were much too childish to be proper sadists. No they just ran scrimmages on the earth and its women and its vulnerable: all they knew how to do was to hit-and-run and hurt. It was better to let them die alone—he thought. They're already dying anyway.

He stepped on his cigarette and readied for his departure. The chlorine and ammonia fumes were still settled for those who could smell it. The morning air was lifting it away on the back of the thinning humidity as the day got on and after the orange flames of the burn-off that had taken place during the night and into the early morning near dusk when Jack always arrived. The sun was starting to get too warm anyway. He turned slightly and looked at five men just before he entered the offices through the glass doors. He knew beforehand he shouldn't have looked back at them. Then he turned and went in. He was thinking again of Natalya: it was natural— she made him natural— she created him human every time and every time without fail. So what the fuck— he had to think as he opened the glass doors: A tall and pleasantly bearded middle aged Brit walked down the stairs. His head stayed lowered as he stepped: he thought he was alone. It looked that the Brit had gotten things down to a science and was almost feeling comfortably numb. Then Jack was bourn into the world for the man and that world returned to shatter the man. Still the full man who is half of what he once was is prepared. Jack knows this type, he knows it's the most pathetic type but he knows it's pathetic not because of itself, not because of its perfect nature; he knows the type is a result, not a self-causing agent and for that he can pity him maybe envy him maybe not. He notices immediately the hollow eyes, the tired black flags on his skin (or are they survival spots spotting the man black and sagging into what he remembers of the earth, the scars of semi-voluntary incarceration?) Jack notices those flags pulling the man's brow down head down, and I say to him, Jack thinks, I say to him for no reason at all except perhaps because I mean it: 'Cheer up!' He lifts his head, and all is apparent: He gives me a smile to appease me, since he wants no more than to move on down the stairs in peace, but his smile is the saddest thing you've ever seen: He is about to cry, but cannot. We pass each other and it is over. He has appeased me, and that is all he wanted, so that he could go back to his world. There are so many of these ghosts, these rejects. They're completely divorced from their civilization. They are like Mia's and Pow's who never returned from a war. They speak the local language, and want no more because they no longer understand anything. And if they're not ignored, then they're ridiculed by the Compound gossip-army of wives and neutered men and the bold incurable self-fascinated ones: it's all black and white. The dust never settles here. We fail to understand the perverse reality of our involvement in the terrible conundrum of it. So I say, says Jack, I say: you go black and white, you go vodka, the vigilant abstraction to the mind it brings and the basic ethic that we know because we were baptized as infants— I did not know this before, and now that I know it I have a strong, rabid resistance to it— knowing that perfected ethic now at this later time in my life knowing it in full and only imperfectly resistant to it— a result— and that is all, the muted drunkenness is divine unbelievable: Bach, Natalya, Natalya, Natalya. O Natalya— the Ghosts have had Bach excised from their minds: They walk as dead zombies in the Frigidaire desert compounds and air-conditioned muck offices of this mucked-money pay-off land. So in the end the Brit has no choice— he has to appease me— he hopes I'm one of the those who will let him get away with it maybe because no one is around or they feel a slight twinge in their conscience and let him be because of it— but he appeases me— I'm one of them who will let him do it— he takes his luck this time and

goes away with his bagful like a ruined child soldier who beat his expectations by getting his candy and private ammo— ah but he's less ruined than we are— he takes it and then gets away so that he can hide away— and then he removes himself back to his own psychedelic world like a crab pulling itself back into its fortification of rocks. Then he takes the candy to his shell-like mouth and returns to his science he's comfortably numb again. And I go back to my world, which is without exaggeration, wretched. The Bosses need me. I need Natalya. I need her very badly.

Six

Miriam's Hack

The Ghosts had been covered. He thought they were like old European Royalty. He imagined they must have been like that a long long time ago when they all died alone and suddenly— shot or fading and decomposing in small and impoverished groups of mother with daughter or uncle with nephew— for the last time and never to rise again, in old, destitute manors and castles. The new women were either colored or barren, not of skin or fertility but of sign and number. It was an abstraction over the whole: one arid sky over the earth— all signs of worlds gone. He imagined it was like that for everyone, that he was colored for the same ones who for him in his non-world were colored. And the men were barren. Humankind had done no more than perfect its nature, much too easy a task in his mind, the short-cut, the cheat, the cheat that wasn't even a good hack.

'At least we could have hacked the bloody metaphysics,' he thought— as he unconsciously imitated a British-ism and submitted completely to the absence of intellectual possibility and meaningful deliveries of the soul. The fact was that everything had been drawn to the ground.

It was the first big bash they'd had since Bill had left, since Bill had not come back— of no interest to anyone except himself and sometimes Jim, when Jim cared at all about anything. It was that party that broke the present and created the mold.

Bill's Filipean tube had managed some excellent adaptive maneuvers with a young newcomer American boy whose face was as ugly as Satan's monsters must have been when thrown out of their contrived mothers. She had done it quickly, and that had been that with the Flipo and her Americano boyovnik: some pay-offs, and a lot of maniacal and aggressive demands by the care-struck boyovnik to the yellowskinned management of his company; the CEO directed his chief Controller to pay off official-X himself just to stave off a scandal. The CEO wanted the little bastard out of his outfit but he had no choice but to buy time so that the little boyovnik could be thrown out on the basis of something more sinful—like proprietary infringement and stealing company secrets: something statutory, he did want that Bolshevik's ass badly.

That night at the bash was when Jack decided to kill Bill's Filipino adulteress. He'd just copy from his murder twenty years ago of a pale white woman whose color had only grown with the stare of death on her face; he'd take her muck to work, he thought, and give it out to the Shiite dude who defied all custom and

walked in old jeans day after day after day and never got a grade raise by the Bosses. He'd like that. He knew he would. Jack'd like it himself. So he'd hand it over to the smart Shiite dude, his partner number one in putting cigarettes to death out on the balcony away from the computers and the otherwise perfectly genteel but now gutted pre-fab mucked office cubicles. He'd give to the Shiite dude: the man who sold the world, he always thought the likeable little fucker would sell the world in order to gain all for himself if he could. Not to sell his world, not the world of his people, his sect, no the other world: the 'Thobes' in the term of Bill's adulteress's twisted and moronic encomium to Compound life—and only after that the Christians. Think of that! What omens! What truths this young man spoke! The hardened art of it, so hardened and so young, ah, but youth is measured differently in Islam, he thought, in Eastern Christianity, and yes, yes that is it: inadvertent sayings which were hard-won thoughts—God bless the little fool— that had come before to his mind by logical steps and periods of contemplation on his society, its violations, and the Quran— and which he had spoken to others, others in a large dark cool desert tent with SUVs circled around it: all kneeling in prayer, drunk on Coors with his seven other friends and their Kalashnikovs, singing, "Ala Akbar!" and standing intoxicated and firing into the air, dying on government dole either way. These new ones were not as Ayad had seen up close a decade ago back from Afghanistan; no, a new generation had already sprouted, and this one was not able to play for time. They had efficiency, resources, and the market to think of: a new formula for the newly partially-radicalized young. Yes, the little Shiite man would be the right man, a hedge fund manager a few years down the line, a Sharian banker distributing money to his market friendly Armani-suited guerillas.

Then Jack'd scare Miriam to death with the muck. He pictured it: he opens the muck, says, "Miriam, it's Bill's Fliplo. Now you don't need to say anything," he says with a grin as Miriam vomits and runs from him and is silent as the grave until either he gets her or she's carted off like a failed member of his ex's coven to a room full of white light. 'Poor Kansas Bitch,' he thought. It wasn't her fault that she was born who she was; no excuse, birth wasn't an excuse for Eve, Jack said to himself laughing and moving his lips to the aerial history of the valley of the kings and the dead and the entombed and the angelic: face twisted, totally unruléd now and on the brink of amassing all of his powers, Nietzsche-like, Jesus-like, like Alexander the Great, like a sparrow. So many eyes had been drowned by sun in that land: carrion, and the heat of the sun is the only scavenger animal. So many consciences had been neutralized by the constant glass-lens glare and the damning movement of sand and dust: he was just going to perfect the human nature in the muck of it the only way it could be perfected and for the only reasons. And Frigidaire was his favorite brand. He had liked it since he was a boy in that magical boy-era when a kingsnake crossed his path down at the land where the river ran just below the embankments of the riverrun past Eve and Adam's baseball diamond; from where after a Coke he delivered himself to the river to watch the tadpoles boil, cupped in his hands then dropped back into the hot claybed pools; whence back to the candy shack at the diamond to grab a cream soda from the Frigidaire and pop it open and pay. Since then.

If the Royalty was dead so was Saul Bellow. Saul must have died alone he thought. But he never lost control, he thought. 'It's just that the literary forethought which is the intention of the writer—" — he cropped it there, finishing it off yet thinking of Bellow's Dangling Man and that man's diaries, but he had read it in German— Man in der Schweben— the diarist-narrator had had a quieter voice that way, more approachable and sympathetic and more reflective as Saul had meant it to be a novel of all of these things; he raped the cigarette for all it was worth and flipped the dusted stub through the air up over the neatly coiled barbed wire atop the high security fences of the industrial grounds. "Dangling Man," "Man in der Schweben."

Couldn't he still have fun though, when the thoughtful diaries went dead? What about Jim? Well: Miriam, carted off before he could get her. If not then not and another one gets murdered. Her body had followed the cast of her mind. Shriveled, afraid, desolate in her American way. And now it was time to bring it to perfection. Poor thing, he thought. Too much Tupperware, too much Frigidaire and more to come; he'd be sure he was mean before he went out and played the adman. Still dangling?

David Bowie's words, he thought: 'I never done good things/I never done bad things/I never did anything out of the blue.' It was like that with him. 'Deserves got nothing to do with it—' Now that was brilliance he thought. At another level it was also true. It was, aside from all of the analysis, ultimately the truth in murder and therefore in any form of perfecting behavior. It was just that way—he argued with himself thinking of how much the dead Royals would have hated it; of how astonished and horrified for their dearest they must have been when they were faced with it. And of how ill but true it really was. Then he did something he had not expected of himself at all—not even in a half-life. He screamed. His voice ripped the air. A harangue. From out of nowhere. Then he sat there at the edge of his bed in the late afternoon muck room light: brown indecency of the whole place all grey pretended ochres, silent again.

Then another thing happened that he would never have imagined in a thousand million years. Miriam came into his bedroom cautiously peeling at the dark. She said: "Jack, are you there?" He sat petrified; he could see her plainly; and she was frightened and blind, as a rodent or newborn might be, yet she was doing a thing of immense bravery and compassion. He was overwhelmed. "Miriam what are you *doing* here?" he asked. "I heard you scream." "What? But how do you know that I screamed?" He still couldn't catch his thoughts. "I knew it was you. That's all." She paused for a moment: "Are you alright?" she asked. He was totally stunned, the whole thing was not normal. "Miriam" he started; he didn't know what to say. "Miriam what are you *doing* here?" he questioned her in exasperation but with no anger. "I wanted to make sure you were alright," she told him. He broke: he fell back on his bed and laughed and laughed as hard as his lungs and chest would allow him. Then he lifted himself up and said "Miriam!" feeling that he was in the presence of an outspoken being. "What is it Jack? Are you afraid?" He was astounded at her astuteness. He suddenly felt free and he did something else that he would never have imagined in a thousand million years. He yelled "Miriam, you're beautiful! Did you know that? You're beautiful Miriam!" He was still stunned and crazed but he discerned the body of

the whole event clearly and rationally. He suddenly wanted her, her giant soul in that small and fragile grey frame that passed for a body. She didn't resist. "If you need it Jack, it's ok with me," she said in another sign of female wisdom. "I need it Miriam," he said, exhausted with a desire that needed to be satisfied or he'd die. She laid her body on him and pulled him up and led him in. She stayed quiet except for a tiny noise before he came.

Seven

THE HORROR

This, naturally, was the end of a beginning. The servants in the world, it was callous. (Where was Saul? O God where was Saul?)

He woke in the morning and looked at the diary entry that lay under the sheets. He realized he must have brought it from a drawer last night before he went to bed. He automatically read it out loud in the rough morning voice that was his alone in the universe.

He read: "It was just a few years before; but that few years before was a lifetime, a century. It was just a grid on the other side of that cusp. It made all the difference." He stopped, his mind meandering, lost.

'Miriam,' he thought, listing like a boat or a needle seamlessly from the diary entry to her immaculate self: 'You're beautiful,' he said to her, even if she was home with Jim. 'And now I know. I'll leave the Flipo be, you said you'd invite her and her new boy-love to have drinks with you and Jim, and that I had to be there, that I absolutely had to be there, that it was for my own good, and that it would be fun, that you would make me happy even with those people: *you'll see*, she said, as she took my head in her hands and kissed my hair and my forehead passionately: moving down to the lips and with her mouth and her hands sliding down from my temples and skull to my cheeks: you graced my corrupt human skein, my love, o.

He sat thinking on the bed. 'I've told her everything, everything, the pale lady,' he explained to himself. 'She bowed her head, then she commanded me: *it was life*, she said, *the worst and most evil part of it, the greatest taboo in history, but it was life*: how far could she go, this woman, I asked myself? She's too wise to reform me, I thought, it was more than that though, I thought: she wants to tease me, to let me off the hook, to draw the sinker out of my throat. I love that small cleft of hers, it's like wild berries in the snow. And her breasts are growing, she's putting on weight, her grayness is changing to blush and flesh: in her bones she's rising, her hips are gaining. And now she's with child, she told me with a wild smile, so wild and free and girlish for the moment. Blooming. And then let me in immediately, to quiet my astonishment, to bury the need for words: 'but softly, the fetus,' she said. She came off with her little sound again, just as I expanded into the universe with pleasure and wholeness in my groin and chest and mind and heart. But this time her face was alight and her eyes were closed and her face looked fascinated with a new terror in her life, in love with it. 'It's been years, Jack, and it couldn't be done. You did it, Jack,' she said to me.

She did not embrace Jack in thanks, she gathered his head into her arms and held him and kissed him on his hair again as she had before and as she would again, and said, 'But it's yours. It's yours more than it's mine.'

'It's ours,' said Jack.

'Well yes, but it belongs to you. It's a gift you have been given by giving. It's for you, not for me. But I am so happy!'

Then she cried so softly with a mien and form of control in her tears and the pursing of her lips on his hair that made his eyes grow wide as she held him and he took her to him again, and she made little noises, more than before, little soft noises, 'careful though,' she giggled, 'your fetus.' Then she paused in her heavy breath and looked at him with a strange strenuousness and even confused portent in her eyes: 'I'd give it to you if I could,' she said and then heaved and sighed and he came and in his baited breath said: 'But that's impossible,' and his head fell onto her bare and wet chest.

One evening Jack and Jim were playing a game of pool in the sports center in the Compound. Jim had wanted to play there specifically, not at their haunt on the island of solace across the water where they could imbibe. Jim said:

"I'm selling her, Jack, just what you always suggested," Jim said to him.

"What are you talking about Jim?" Jack asked; he felt sweat.

"I'm talking about the Man Who Sold the World, Jack." Jim's voice was unsteady and his eyes were gleaming and looked straight at him for a moment.

"What have you done Jim? Have you done something?" Jack asked. His gut had fallen. Beads were knitting him.

Jim bent down and pulled a bag from under the pool table. Jim looked straight into Jack's eyes and stared him down with an anger that appeared to reflect some necessary goal that he had decided would be his own end: yet with a sad stupefaction in his eyes, in his own horror, a parallel eye stuck way back in his mind that wanted to share a rational end with Jack: "It's the muck in the bag, Jack." It was not a snarl. It came from a different place, a bar stool, a dungeon, a dead man on the streets of Sophia or Fantasia, of Riyadh or Paris or the Pedophilia Hotel in Hollywood, of all the places where he had whored and reported the muck to his centurions, in his funky secret life. Married to a gray framed average skeleton, for no reason that he could ever understand but had found it suited him: Now finding that she had mixed diamonds into his life of dirt.

Jack ran, ran as fast as he never thought he could in a thousand million years; he screamed and fell on the black pavement and lay on his side curled up but with his head to the side vomiting and screaming. He was face to face with himself.

And it was the end of him. And it was the end of Miriam and her fetus. It was the end of the world.

Eight OF THE CUSP

“By announcing this [execution], the Ministry of Interior underlines to everyone the determination of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, may Allah protect him, to maintain security, arrest the criminals and apply Allah’s rules against anyone who aggresses against the innocent, sheds their blood, violates their honor, or steals their possessions and at the same warns anyone tempted to carry out such actions that the Shar’ia punishment will be his fate.”



Nine

WHAT'S LEFT?

The following notes were found in a shoebox in Jack's closet in his bedroom. They're just scratched entries jotted down on separate pieces of paper and folded into the shoebox. This first was dated five years ago. It follows:

"The remnants of Solidarity, for me, are symbolized in the Lech Walesa airport in Gdansk: it's basically just an advertisement for a shack now, most of the things at the airport more denuded than they were under Communism: no maintenance has been done on the airport for at least twenty years, yet the new billboard advertisement with the picture of Lech Walesa would make one think that things were otherwise: well, they were, prosperity included, and I could go back in time there to an extent. There's a little jewelry shop in the port city of Gdansk. The sea is very near and in view of the shop, a few stone steps away and around a corner through the alleys. The sea smells nice in Gdansk, even with the tar on the water near the piers; the gassiness from the spread of the tar reflects flat rainbows on the black surfaces of the still water: the water's jaded but it's invigorating for a constant traveler and also calms the writer's bane, if you will, especially a failed one, it hooks the red herrings that way and bleeds them 'till he's better. In the shop they put shiny amber on rings, necklaces, and bracelets. I've got a three million year old mosquito preserved in a ring of amber that I bought there, they told me they get the amber off the coast. I was in Copenhagen a year after this. Copenhagen was, for me, not so much cosmopolitan as it was socially ecumenical (would people understand what I'm saying with this?). There's a stone bridge at the far edge of the fifth lake in the posh district; it's part park ground and grassy jogging lanes; part claustrophobia. It's rather eerie in the night at around ten when you get the feeling that it's too late: too late in life and too late to be out. The arctic blasts blow the skeletal branches of the anorexic trees (they are so gangly) below in the dark grass (an error, at night, it's an ecumenical city and depends on daylight) and the geese get corralled up against the ramparts of the bridge; the ice plates force them there, they can only float on un-crystallized water or they'll freeze and turn into comic crenellations. Whenever I think of it now I am reminded of the early '70s George Harrison and Eric Clapton Cream song 'Badge.' The lyrics are able to wrestle me down to hell and deep earth: they're just too tragic. . . [taped on at the bottom of the page, a new clean page begins]. . . *On the other hand* [he underlined it] the whole thing became a pleasant activity in itself, for itself, which became quite critical to keeping that travel up instead of settling down with a permanent job; seeing civilization in motion was very invigorating and actually addictive. These things were concrete: trains,

planes, boats, taxis, hotels, apartments, new restaurants, new friendships, new night clubs, even art galleries and their owners. Where my memory of things used to tend towards inertia and therefore stupor (psychologically translated), now they got moving and animated and I could relate much better to the present: it felt good, in other words. No alcohol, no hard stuff, a milder environment for artistic impressions, avoiding, I suppose, the artist's bane, to the extent possible anyway. Impressions were taken in more effectively—even 'softly'—and also cautiously; if there was something to be given out, like a story or a new section to a novella, it got out on paper with my poetic torrents under control. [Then he had struck out the last sentence near the bottom of the page, white space dominating the rest of the cab.] ~~That in itself was a new thing, and very relieving. Anyway, with that in hand, I was quite motivated to keep on moving from city to city, or to extend the initially planned length of my stays."~~

This other note was found; it's dated twelve days after Ayad's accident. It follows:

"I designed Mega-Corp's AR/AP system. So let me list the consequences:

"Fucking metaphysical, isn't it? Well,

"*'It'* is more than one.

"If it was metaphysical, it was bloody metaphysical.

"*'It,' 'that,'* would blanket your reality.

"*'It,' 'that,'* would unveil your conceits.

"*'It,' 'that,'* and *the rend*, would abridge your welcome.

"*'It,' 'that,'* the rend would take you out of history.

"*'It'* would have you end in a surety of massive ramifications.

"*'It'* would show you carrion and famacide."

Then a written out passage. . . such that. . . no, without comment, just that he noted the page number. Not dated:

"To the Enlightenment, that which does not reduce to numbers, and ultimately to the one, becomes illusion; modern positivism writes it off as literature. Horkheimer, Adorno (p. 7)"

This last one was found without a date. He gave it a headline, or a title: 'The Noble Profession.' It follows:

"The Noble Profession: I killed the pale one, you know? I killed her dead. I was seventeen. My father got me off to college the day after and handled the forensic muck and the officials himself: how clean his hands must have been in his professional mopsuit. He said, "You'll redeem yourself. You'll take the noble profession. Now get out. If you do this again, I'll kill you myself. Now get out." Now I ask myself: What had Harrison to fear of Clapton? Everything. But Harrison was a fool and Clapton a romantic clown and self-wounded wolf. O Miriam. The horror."

Then attached to this note at the bottom with a piece of tape, he put a ripped-out scrap of paper; it had cigarette-end burn marks on the edges and one on the text, spanning the gap between the two words 'lifetime' and 'century,' obliterating the comma: half of the 'm' and the whole of the 'e' of 'lifetime, and almost the whole of the 'c' of 'century.' It went as follows:

"It was just a few years before; but that few years before was a lifetime, a century. It was just a grid on the other side of that cusp. It made all the difference."

Of all things. No reference, no date. Of all things this.

July 2009—September 2009

Epilogue

"A moral nature burdened and over-strung, and a critical faculty fearless but helplessly subjective – isn't that the true tragedy of your ultimate Puritan? However, suppose I am wrong about the facts. Shall I tear the book up, or will it do as a fable?"

"As a fable you may publish it. It's all your invention; but perhaps there's a better philosophy in it than in your other books."

"How so?"

"Because now you're not arguing or proving or criticising anything, but painting a picture. The trouble with you philosophers is that you misunderstand your vocation. You ought to be poets, but you insist on lying down the law for the universe, physical and moral, and are vexed with one another because your inspirations are not identical."

"Are you accusing me of dogmatism? Do I demand that everybody should agree with me?"

"Less loudly, I admit, than most philosophers. Yet when you profess to be describing a fact, you can't help antagonising those who take a different view of it, or are blind altogether to that sort of object. In this novel, on the contrary, the argument is dramatised, the views become human persuasions, and the presentation is all the truer for not professing to be true. You have said it somewhere yourself, though I may misquote the word: "After life is over and world has gone up in smoke, what realities might the spirit in us still call its own without illusion save the form of those very illusions which have made up our story?"

*George Santayana,
The Last Puritan*

THE PART THAT HOLDS

PROLOGUE

There comes a time in each of our lives when we somehow glance the truth. Truth is a demanding master, it inevitably looks straight at back at us. Invariably this confers much guilt, and a lesser amount of innocence. We are made uncomfortable with ourselves at that time.

On January 20, 1981, Ronald Reagan was inaugurated 39th President of the United States of America. He evoked a cult presence. It was meant to stanch all of America's damage without fixing it, no bandages, no stitches, not even a butterfly across the gashed wounds. Nothing. A pretence.

When Reagan was elected Governor of California in 1966 we were at war in Southeast Asia, all of it illegal, most of it covert in non-declared countries.

The Free Speech Movement was at its pinnacle at Berkeley. Many powerful clowns and fuck-babies were euphoric now that Reagan was installed. After unseating Governor Pat Brown, Brown was forced to resign as a Regent of the University of California. The votes that the Regents carried were now in favor of the clowns and fuck-babies that I have just mentioned. Reagan went into action. He had UC Berkeley President Clark Kerr fired (the votes at the Regents were at the right number to accomplish this now)—most of the ground work already having been done by Edwin Pauley as the mole in the Regents; LA FBI Chief Weseley Grapp illegally (naturally) passing on information on professors and students; J. Edgar Hoover (without introduction) rubber-stamping these information relays; and CIA director John McCone, who had been “upset” by what was going at Berkeley for some years. At the same time Reagan set loose federal agents and CIA recruiters onto Berkeley's campus, going after what he called “campus malcontents and filthy speech advocates.” FSM becomes FSA. He with Pauley's inside connections as a Regent himself, he had protesters filmed on Sproul Plaza from the roofs and the windows of the Martin Luther King Jr. Student Union Building (which ironically houses the Edwin W. Pauley Ballroom—yes, the very same Pauley). He identified protestors for harassment and potential elimination. He had known dissidents set up. He was warming up. Iran-Contra was already a fait accompli. This could become a list, with the list going on and on.

But there is another story that ends with the this Former President of the Actor's Guild Union's new transformation in the officialdom. That story is about

a man, a loyal American; loyal, experienced, faithful, but who had been caught in too much of the cross-fire. . . and much, much more of that. We will trace that narrative from precisely there, which in that precision effectively begins eight years earlier in Oakland in 1972.

One THE LANDING— *Eight Years Earlier*

1972, at the time of the raid.

"Sargent!" called a delighted figure from the small crowd awaiting the arriving passengers at the air terminal. He had just gotten off the plane. It was Dana. She threw her arms around him immediately, and whispered in his ear. . . 'everybody is waiting for you, Sargent.' Voice: *Everybody, Sargent.*

He recognized her. He smiled looking ahead of him, he was willing to be led by her. Who wouldn't recognize her? Who wouldn't be willing to be lead by her? She took his arm and they walked the whole way to her Toyota in the airport parking garage. The obliqueness never left him anymore. He felt her body pressure on his arm and against his waist and the upper side of his body. He was oblique but still drowning from the touch.

Later in the evening, in a get-out apartment: Manny. *Manny.*

"We have something for you, Sargent." Manny. The leader. The Leader. "A little bit of explosives work. Pipe bombs. Okay?" Sargent staring watching Manny carefully nonetheless, saying nothing, staring. Manny again: "Government buildings. Your access rights. Okay?" Manny. Sargent already knew the answer—Yes, of course Manny: "When, where, equipment, car, apartment. Manny."

Mind of Sargent: Flash, Tents. Then, Get out. Now. Back to Manny.

"All waiting." That having been Manny, referring to the "When, where, equipment, car, apartment."

"Good Manny. Fine. I'll be some days on my own first, I want to do some drinking and see some old friends if it's all alright with you."

"Fine Sargent. Don't kill too much time though."

Manny. I thought it was my job to kill time. Why don't you choose your words more carefully, Manny?

Days later: Squads, raid gear. FBI, CIA, ATF. Rooms. Debriefings. No terminal evidence. Released. Sargent released. Under surveillance. File: "Chain of command, Classified Top Secret, former covert operator military intelligence, excessive ground experience and knowledge retention—unnamed official to be protected at all costs from exposure by subject, subject classified "defection

to civilian subculture." Case in possession Classified Top Secret. In case of red, describe and refer to Code A at moment. Consider incident deferred, i.e. drop all contact and surveillance of subject, until and if informed by your head of protocol. Final note: Do not underestimate subject. Secretly trained, unconventional techniques, psychological warfare micro and macro, long term imaging retention and linguistic memory transpositions, other. Don't query further unless status critical in which case case is red, describe and use Code A and defer. End file."

This is when the shadows started to haunt him. This is when the cover-up started to blanket itself across his soul. This is when the demons started to produce fury in him. He moved now from house to house, of course. What else could he do? As if he were not being watched. No, not at all. But it was not bothersome. It was nothing. The plan was forged not for that. The plan was forged for implementation: What made him, what did she know, what forced him out? And later, when it was all over, Dana came in a dream, and she touched him, and said: "Sargant, I didn't know any of this was going to happen." And he said to her: "Dana, I did. And you had nothing to do with it. You are innocent." Then pausing, he said to her: "Do not forget that, Sweetheart." Before she disappeared, she responded: "Sargant: The dead know more than the living. And I am dead. I was killed in the raid. I am not innocent, though I knew little at the time." Then she disappeared from the dream or the dream ended.

But that was later. There was always a "before." There was always this question of his handler, and he was aware of it as much as any narrative that tracked him. The man came to him came at night in the jungles on patrol and he came to him in the bars in Saigon nudging up against him on the neighboring bar stool. Sometimes the man was a dream, sometimes he was a real man with real papers. What he was relatively sure of was that he would never be rid of him. Not in this life, nor in any other. The question was always the same: "Do you have the goods, Sargant?" Sometimes the man digressed, "What a perfect name: Sargant. We'll make you Colonel some day."

Two

SAM'S HOFBRAU

Sam's Hofbrau downtown Oakland 1973.

Still stitched. Friends of Applebead, the Service. Tired. Moving. Getting answers to his questions: Quietly, no evidence, too well trained, but the innuendo and local contexts of his movements not escaping his surveyors. Roast beef sandwich gravy, root beer. The man walks in, sits down with him on a stool placed at the same eating table. Sargant's eyes go up, then go down return to his food.

"Sargant. Good to see you. Whatcha been up to these days, food's good here."

Sargant: No response. Eats.

"That's my man. Worried about you though. So is Applebead." Hard stop on last word.

Sargant sips on his root beer. Gets up, goes to pay his bill. The man passively but with the indicative eye of an afternoon sun watches him walk out without either of them saying a word. Then the sun got shot out of the sky.

That night in bed in half-way house in the back streets behind Lake Merritt near to library. Can hear traffic. Can hear his mind. Not troubled. Is getting his answers, stores in memory transpositions, classifies there.

Receives heroine injection from local pusher that night: Flow of Light, walking behind library, smelling memory of Mary, Mary not even memory only the smell of her skin left; pungent smell Lake Merritt's waft of air-flow; and blow to back of his head; a sidewalk study in blood: blood of thirty-eight years prior to those late night steps: born 1935: Our brother, our friend, our fellow citizen, the uncle of our children, the child of his mother and father and the grandchild of his grandparents, a server of his country, Major Sargant Meyers, sent to Copenhagen with new rank and programmable memory losses, sleeper. Covert techniques and tradecraft still intact. In the deep sleep of fogs and solitary nightingales.

Three COPENHAGEN

Seven years later, a February night walk around one of the five lakes in the posh district of Copenhagen, the geese corralled into limited areas of non-iced water in the lakes done by the icy turfs of the larger masses of iced-water crowding the squawking beasts into large spots of corralled white necks and heads and floating bodies, and the dark roads and the dark city and the dark bridges with a progressive swoosh of background car-noise over the lakes hollowed out the trees for him that night and he saw the skeletal branches of the trees take the northern European wind very unusually. No Dana, no nothing, no attendant memory of. Operational guidelines, that was all. . . and a mission, hardly important, he was still cognizant enough to see that. He was not totally unaware of his situation. But the skeletal branches of the trees around the lakes took the wind not in a normal way, and he was scared, mutedly, but scared. Of all that might not come. Of his inside. It is too sad for the writer to continue in this vein. The Major was scared. . . and where was Dana when. . . Applebead was. . . he couldn't remember the line of reasoning he had just found. . . he broke off. . . newspaper. . . John Lennon had been declared dead yesterday [not *shot*. . . *declared dead*]. . . there was a short phase of time, then he was. . . out. . .

Four MANHATTAN

One year later. New York City, 1980. He had roused once again to move himself, then had settled into the deeper sleep in deeper ground, in a deeper city, a sleep-time to die in.

What he was thinking was that he had been trampled on too many times perhaps to keep living. He crawled up the tunnel, a little like a monkey, grasping at the iron coated with rust and slime. He thought maybe he could make it back up. He pushed the manhole up. It was dark out, the sun was down. The stop lights only flashed orange or red showing nothing more than garbage or pavement. In his human mind, watching around him as he crawled out of this utility hole, menacing his elbows and then his knees with sorry abrasion, he couldn't remember rivers, romances, families, friends, occupations, hobbies, cars, schools, or if there had been any. Maybe there had been fishing trips. Maybe he had encountered bears and had rafted rivers. In this type of anti-perception he began to walk down the streets, a ragged nothing of a man, something of a moon not above him, something of a sky as unreal as anything could be. He rested and slept in a warm heap of garbage in an alley way.

In the morning he was a little surprised (as surprised as he could be) at not being roused by some city man or police officer. He picked himself up, brushed himself down a little, then walked, with no destination in mind. He didn't know why, but the short sentence "sorry, pal," came into his mind; he didn't actually think about it. He crossed over street after street, and then people started to appear. He wondered if come nightfall, if he lived or was not taken in, he would be lucky enough to witness some private crime of some sort, somewhere in the big city. That's what his mind had come to, perhaps.

A car raced by, and he was surprised. For some reason he touched his pants a little strenuously as a kind of reaction, and then, being certain everything was alright (for some reason), stopped it. Just a second later his eyes glazed over a little bit (something which frequently happened to him), and he saw a fountain a distance off. He decided to walk to it, or his legs decided to move in that direction. Nobody took notice of him.

As he walked, for a very short few moments he remembered prison. Just a little. He remembered a cell and a bed and a kind of dining hall. And the face of a man, some man. Some fellow prisoner. And then being tied down and a light shining down on him and a young blond face staring down at him with a gleaming smile. And then he couldn't remember any more. Or he wouldn't. Or he stopped remembering with a certain mechanical aspect to this stop.

He reached the fountain. His eyes glazed over as he watched it spouting water into the sunlight. No one seemed to notice him. Or no one seemed to care

enough to pick him out of the crowd with their eyes and their consciousness. He took a seat on a bench. He could see above the fountain there was a high building. There were many people in every direction, and he wondered a little bit at it. And then a dog. Stray, or loose. And a trash can. And some grass, mostly stamped down to a level of semi-rooted dirt. Still he hadn't talked to anybody, not a word. He didn't know if he would remember how to talk, although he guessed he would. He did think about this.

He hadn't eaten. He picked some garbage out of the trash can, sifted it, found some eatable components of a yesterday's sandwich. (Apparently the dog was interested in his activity also.) He curled the bread in his fingers and smelled the thin lunch meat. It didn't smell rancid. He ate the meat first and then the bread which he had rolled up into several little balls. He didn't give anything to the dog. The dog scratched and moaned a little. He had a thought of avocados. There was a street vendor of hot-links on one of the paths near the fountain. A man stood paying another man. He noticed this, almost carefully. Then he got up and walked a little around the fountain. His eyes usually kept to the ground and sometimes strayed to the fountain and its stream of water.

Walking around the fountain, slowly and with stops in pace, he underwent some flashbacks. Faces appeared to his mind on a field surrounded by wet overgrowth. Camouflage tents were sprawled on the field. And then there was night patrol. And then there was nothing for nine hours of slow walking through dense jungle. And then there was a raid and everything was black and loud for a single moment. And then there was really nothing but an emptiness . . . at this feeling he let off the memory and delivered his gaze to the waters of the fountain. (He did this as if under a mental directive which had nothing in common with a conscious decision.) He felt a little shallow, and he, that is his bare and atrophied sense of identity, felt a sense of surprise. He rarely felt anything which could describe his state of mind. Still he hadn't looked at the sky. Still there was prison in the back of his mind. Even war.

He felt tired and wanted to sleep. He didn't intend to sleep just now, however, and let the drowsiness fall into the gait of his legs instead.

A child passed him. The child looked up at him for a moment. He looked down at the child also and their eyes met. The child seemed to open his mouth or smile. He felt a certain life inside, and it was almost as if tears were about to come to his eyes. But instead they glazed over in their habitual pattern and returned to the path, with a slow and meandering sideglance at the fountain which was now in back of him. But then he heard, in back of him at some distance, a high-pitched voice: "Daddy!" For some reason he turned, as if against himself (which was strictly unusual for him). He saw the child wrapped in the arms of a man who had some flowers in one of his hands. AND THEN: He was in a certain state of confusion or even dulled consternation: There was no feeling in him, but he felt this. The combination made his stomach work.

Strictly from his perspective (and there was no other perspective which could be involved) this unusual feeling and the directly related event (his stomach set to work) disappeared as quickly as it had appeared. These kinds of feelings (feeling something disappear as quickly as it had appeared and not knowing it, especially when it came to hunger) kept his body alive, since his mind demanded nothing from his body whereas his senses demanded everything from his body.

This could have been named a legacy of his night patrols in the jungle, when he feared death but didn't fear its aftermath, a combination in which his senses held his body steady while his mind slept, even if his eyes moved and his finger held significant but only half-dispassionate pressure on the trigger of his gun.

He looked down at the ground and saw his black and permanently swollen feet. He guessed he would set to walking now but didn't actually think it and simply began to walk up the park away from the fountain. As he walked he saw nothing (his mind suffered a blank, which included a black-out of his vision) and it could have been night even though it was a day bright with sun. After several minutes of walking in relatively absolute blackness some trigger set off in his brain for no external reason and suddenly his eyes registered the light of day. As a result he looked up with his head and eyes at the green trees and their branches. The sky appeared to him, a pure blue with some small cotton patches of cloud distributed evenly across the large atmospheric dome. From deep in his mind, at some distant resource, he wondered to himself (and it was all strictly abnormal for him to do such a thing) if he would someday be held responsible for the sky and the trees. Perhaps he didn't wonder about this so much but felt it hit his chest hard, with the thought itself somewhere deeper and inflicting the artificial body-blow to make itself known. Something about Mark 8, 24 was desperately attached to his mind in connection with this unusual thought. Something about church. But none of it had any meaning to a long and endless walk through hundreds of months, and so the desperation quickly drizzled and filtered down to the dregs of his soul, leaving nothing upon which cruelty could have been imposed or joy given.

It was crude but true to state that his experience was recidivist and anti-recidivist. Below everything had been real and tangible to a mind that no longer attached great meaning to anything, if any. But up-above it seemed different to him. The flow of his thoughts were more animated by something he wasn't aware of. What he wasn't aware of was his memory, which was animating things in unusual ways which made him feel a sense of detectable identity (which was more identity than he had felt in years). He could remember again the prison. The guards. Being beaten and smashed and then sent to solitary confinement, leather wrist and ankle belts binding him tightly to the white sheet beneath him. Resisting the beating of a young youth-prisoner, just out of the JH to the men's prison, and being beaten himself for it, and sent below. Or the hazing he had experienced as a soldier from his superior officers, even if he was a soldier who performed his infantry and patrol duties without complaint.

The trees and their branches and leaves had a bare sense of this recidivism built into his perception of them (just several seconds before he had had a blank and black mind which was registering nothing through its visual faculty, even though he had been walking away from a fountain which he had observed just half-a-minute before in the happy light of the sun hitting its spouting water), since the Deity could not have been said to have seen anything else in him at the time except an unfelt hunger and the visual registration of the trees and their branches and leaves, except the fact the he was truly human, concretely and emotionally, with a family behind him and a war and a prison. When they tied him down and gave him shots in his arms and legs was, by example, something which walked beneath him at all times, but not as memory. He continued to

walk up the park away from the fountain, and his memory, as always, could only behave as a statute.

Even in the air there was a slight breeze which he felt blowing on his cheeks, since the rest of his body was clothed heavily and his face was covered with hair from his head and a heavy beard. Seeing a bird then, and his head turned. Feeling his legs move, and then noticing that his eyes were directed at the cement of the path, and that he had been detecting the presence of his eye-balls even, and then that he had experimentally turned them to the left and then to the right, and then to the right and then to the left, and then repeating this operation again in reverse order. This was more or less noticed by him, and he felt a soft hit and a tumbling in his chest. It was nothing but his own mind effecting a slight change in his body as the result of a severe loss of human boundaries. He kicked up his pace a bit to get to the upper end of the park where he supposed it would be quiet and more commonplace, even if it couldn't be helped that he did not actually think this with an overt consciousness but with a covert consciousness was induced to movement in this direction because of the commonplaces and the quietness which could be felt to be probably there.

As he walked, there was a crime in the back of his mind which he could not remember. There occurred a flashback of heavy fire and the falling of a man. The shade of this in his mind seemed to be from the war and not from a crime or from prison. When his faculty had a short period of time to reflect on this (done without purpose) it was linked to an earlier flashback (a night raid and then a loudness and then nothing). The feeling of a memory of a crime, however, lingered. But it seemed that this feeling could only touch on the war and had as yet not related itself to the prison also. He noticed this somewhere in him. (Every crime and war in the history of mankind had always been referenced enough as it occurred to be examined and explained while in the process or afterwards. It was thus with his memory, or should have been. Perhaps only the angel Gabriel was sufficiently armed to cope with these complexities. Indeed he had been undergoing an education which had been occurring in his mind for many years and which took place simultaneous with but was patently superior to the presence of his annihilated human boundaries. For practical purposes he had by this time certainly tapped his link to a string of badly defined and deeply subconscious illocutions which would possibly never materialize, because it was a practical matter that he would probably never speak again.)

As he walked up the park his feet felt dirty and loose and beginning to be sunk in gravel. He stopped and wriggled his toes. Nothing had changed at all. The perception had been false. It had been somatic psychosis. All the skin on his feet up to his ankles was perfectly callused. If he ever felt his feet to be wading through blue waters or tramping across soft carpet, it was an event of bodily psychosis which was equally induced by the fact that there was little sensation on the surfaces of his feet due to the callusing.

A sensation hit him: there was again the prison, there was a guard, there was a baton, there was a hand wielding the baton; and then he was down on the cold concrete floor of the maximum-security section. And next. . . he tried to remember what had instigated the beating, the conflict—had he resisted, the non-atrophied, the alive? He wondered—and he wondered if he was wondering, and maybe he didn't, maybe he was just the function of a distilled but desperately suffering central

nervous system—familialy bound, making him ineluctably human, needless to say. He felt a cold run over him, a chill, and his heart gave a thump, and his chest felt another artificial hit inside; he stumbled, was tripped-up by his own stride and the despairing feeling of the almost horrifying somatic interruption, and raised his head as he stumbled to the ground and saw the green of the branches and felt a certain feeling for the park as he fell, or tripped, a certain human love reaching out for the personality of the park, which he felt to be cradling him, which he loved like a brother at that moment and which brought the short heavings of a weeping-spell to his chest, and landed on his knees and braced himself with his palms; in the same motion, without stopping, he reacted to the stumbling, so that he would not be noticed, since he was still, according to some feeling in him, interested in a public survival, or a survival from the public, and regained himself by jumping back up and only then did he stop and stand still. He then wept. (It must be said that only the persons of his memory existed, and informed him as a human being that he was a personage of sorts (he could still comprehend the concept), albeit at the most emasculated level of awareness and life. It occurred to him at times that in prison he had been high-up in the prisoners' unwritten but undeniable hierarchy. His crimes had been passive by comparison with many others." His crimes had been armed robbery and assault (in the get-away). He didn't exactly understand why these things occurred to him. He had not participated in the gang-rapes in the war. He had witnessed them and had been on excursion with the men when they committed them but he had not participated. It occurred to him that these were memories.)

His weeping had stopped.

He had reached the high-end of the park and it was quiet. The trees were everywhere around him and there were little bumps and mounds in the earth all around also, where he could go and hide and sleep in peace and privacy. Maybe he would go back down tonight. He knew how to. It was easy. He walked into the heart of some bushes and trees behind some little bumpy park-hills away from the path which had ended and went to sleep. He slept deeply and he dreamed. He dreamed that he was riding a canoe down a long river and that there were very high cliffs on both sides. He dreamed that he went into the water by diving and swam down deep and peered and breathed and felt the cold water all around him and on his naked eyes; the sensation made his eyes flash in REM sleep, and he blinked in the cold water. It was musical. Then he came up and touched the canoe and held on it, looking around, his arm lashed over the side. A young woman swam to him from out of nowhere, from the edge of one of the cliffs where it meet the water. She came to meet him and touched him where he liked to be touched and there was a whiteness from him in the water very quickly. They went together in the canoe and rowed and rowed in silence without speaking for many many miles and even for many many days until they came to a place where the cliffs widened out into shore and on the shore children were playing and adults were laughing. The woman left him here and he was left alone. She waved to him and he waved back and away she walked into the horde of adults and children, and he canoed away. His heart was drenched in sadness and then he awoke weeping again. He was whimpering in the bushes, and pitifully tossed himself around on his side (a man all dirt and stench and hair) and touched the leaves of the bushes and stared at them like a babe.

That night he did not go back down. Instead he touched death very closely when he had a trembling little heart-attack after he fell back asleep. He was close for breath and did not seem to know what it was or that anything had even changed. Something seemed a little confusing to him and that was all (as he felt a tightness in his chest and voice box). Even with it he was drawn back into sleep. In the morning he stepped up onto his feet and began to walk automatically. There were some birds flying overhead and they chirped and whistled; his eyes drifted up and his ears attached to their sounds. His arm was limp but it did not seem to make a difference to him, since differences in his bodily affectations could not possibly be comprehended by his mind except in the most basic functions as urination, defecation, eating, and drinking. It crept into his mind, amazingly, that as a boy he had written poetry. And through poetry, it occurred to him that he had been a boy, the concept came clear and understandable, in connection with nearly everything, and his mind cleft at his life deeply and he felt that he could remember and his consciousness was struck from lack of food but combined with the memory and he felt deeply and there were represented across his mind in a series of flashes images articulated across his mind like a fugue, those lonesome illocutions which were the true history of an abnormally attentive mind in a world which had not stopped, and which could not be reconciled any longer, or it was as it was—

A centric type of dome roofing and Samna mausoleum and Bukhara-wish/th a single entrance. Alambarde mausoleum in Khurasan-wis. Oh how comely it is the erstmals did dislike his reign and a fould company did ride the soft rib and the sights bereaved did lessen here in a muslomic fortitude wherein labors to be seen in the mind and then in the sword-fucking hand and the rocks and the fires and the fires on the rocks and the rocks in the fires and the carrying of the rocks in the fires and the brutal rapes not yet consigned rapes but brief emancipations for the one and captivity for the other simply ripped the company fould burying the soft rib which was not even yet born which would come after the company fould. Wis khurasan the sights bereaved the same that had the sword-fucking hand and the horses the sights fed rather bereaved but fed and fed more than bereaved and so the moss also on the rocks the larger rocks the cliffs the standing enclaves of tree and cloud and rock above. And fighting must finally crown. And tanks and mechanical guns to come from this very crown on the enclave of tree and moss-rock where the soldier stood the forebegotten loinman consociation wth a zwinglian proposition a thartal treatise was the reason behind it all even the einsteinium dilemna and the forebegotten term over term. The rough leavage on the ground of the yard and the raking of it a cottage there in tht yard and the suicide there and the veins clapped with blood and needles and the yellow eyes clouded over with mistrust and opiated hate a soul lost but bound the nether world and the after life if $x + y$ is eight and x is three then y is five an unsound number but anointed all the same some fox was that chased and then wrapped in hound-jaws but all the same again bent under the anointing father if lifted if not but the burning and the burying and the men tht never starped to see what dthey had donne the bastards

a thartal treatise the ancient but ethically doomed enterprise to which because no one would ever listen. Oh how comely it is when. . . sark it milton what cardn't you see what cardn't you gamble wis khurasan fff zho and then your schok and then your speare and had it all but been bound up properly.

Seventyfive million in these wars gone forty years and saddened and no longer humen; no longer humen; no longer humen; and still trying to strocture a world; these are questionable actds. The soldier in logos clad has hated the cautious statesman from the beginning of the cosal arcttcon since this (states)man issues the directives of pogroms by naming demos and nothing but the blatant unobviated pathology of his henchmen (to whom he avows no narthing) is admitted to court.

But this lasted only for several seconds and then he had inevitably returned to his automism, wherein he could look, listen, even stretch his perceptions a little, but could neither understand nor remember, except in diffuse and bare little feeling-statutes to what would under the normal circumstances of consciousness have been a memory or a string of recollections. But the pity of its loss after several seconds, lingered permanently in him, or found a way to residualize there in his mind in whatever poetic fountain there was left in him. In this way he tripped over his own feet and fell onto the ground and cut his elbows. He lay there for several minutes before getting up. A runner went by him and he noticed the figure and the shady form, caught in park-gloom and early morning sunshine. He struggled up onto his feet, pushing with his palms at the grimy ground, and struggled to plant his legs firmly in a standing position. This done he stood and scratched his nose. He could feel wetness and dirtiness at and around his groin and hind-area. There was so little of it that it hardly seemed to be addressed by the small forms of care which he took for himself. A reference to his consciousness, which he was unconsciously aware of, was that he did not even feel a desire to bathe. He walked on to find a garbage can again in the park somewhere, lower down in the lower part of the park he felt probable. From one of these he would find some sustainable morsels and he could take a drink from a drinking fountain if one could be found that worked. There was also the large public fountain around which benches stood.

When he was a boy his sister had played with him. He had had a sister. She brought the other children over and he made friends with them. In high school he had had a girlfriend and a car. Like those in his group he had played football. He walked down the park and he was busy remembering, as if mental blocks and visual darkness could be shattered by their own inertia and his stomach could dip into the entropy of fire by a thought of food morsels from a waste can. His sister had brought the friends over to the house. There had been a house. He had had a girlfriend after the war. Denine. Yes. He was getting down the park slowly. There were morsels waiting. They (the soldiers) had burned with napalm in the war—a war? he asked himself. He pushed the words out of his mind and found that he did not know what he was doing when he found that he was castigating himself for allowing a memory to organize around words. And then he didn't know what it was—he thought "Hell." And tripped and landed on his hip. But it was only felt bruised and only the physical limitation it caused on his mobility was taken into account since he could hardly feel the physical pain (since it required emotion—sympathetic with an ego—to feel the unhappiness—the pain—of pain) that would have been normal under normal circumstances of body and mind. Feeling the pain of pain was a type of understanding and he knew he did not have it and he did not understand what he was knowing when he knew that he did not have it and he felt himself turning inside and his stomach

felt excoriated and he felt dizzy and then he understood what he knew about the fact that he did not feel the pain of pain when he felt it at that moment and his heart took a siege of enemy contractions which were unreal in the somatic sense but very real to his mind as a psychotic event. The unreal nature was strong enough to bring on the corresponding but real somatic event and his arm went more limp than before and his breath was closer, but in all it was nothing. He had reached the lower end of the park and he could see many people moving quickly and some more slowly in an area fenced-in with dogs running around on sand and a shed bordering. He walked to the first trashcan he saw and dipped his nose in and noticed nothing which could interest him. He moved onto the next one slowly and with dragging feet and bent shoulders and downward chin put his right arm in and sifted with a knowing hand through the trash: he felt a brown-bag and pulled it out and found a bitten-into stale donut. He sniffed it and then put it into his mouth whole and chewed slowly while again dipping his arm back into the same trashcan. Something hit his foot and he felt a sharp pain run up his spine. He looked down and he recognized it to be a skateboard. And then there was what he recognized to be a boy of some age come and pick it up humbly with care. The boy looked up at him and he looked down at the boy. The boy said: "Sorry about that." He gave a nod to the boy. The boy nodded back and then turned and walked off and away. He watched the boy walk for several seconds while he chewed his donut and scratched his eyes and nose. The pain lingered a little in his spine but he felt most of it in a dull tingling in his ankle. It seemed to crawl around in his leg a little in his calf but then it quickly disappeared with his attention turned back to interrogating trashcans for food. He interrogated one after another until he felt a dull satiate relaxation of tensions in his stomach. He thought to himself, the actual words, he deliberately passed them through his mind (which was strictly unusual): "I have made a foundation in my stomach." He marveled for a moment at his thought and its deliberative aspect. Maybe his nod to the boy had opened up a channel of wider understanding of his situation. The taste of the donut still lingered in his mouth stronger (or more noticed because more pleasant) than the taste of the other food-components. Presently he stood staring at a woman and child. The woman pushed an upright carriage which the child sat in. The child was looking around quietly. The woman had her eyes and face straight ahead on the path in front of her. They went very slowly and easily. He noticed the ease and the slow pace. It made him feel good. He felt warm. His lips smiled under his bearish beard. His eyes crinkled. And then it all stopped. And then he felt like a cement building rooted to the ground. He looked up with a type of slowness of almost mechanical origin and saw the fountain spurting water and capturing yellow light. He did not feel well but did not feel sick. He felt nothing. He felt the light on his retinas. He felt what it would be like to be in water—but only for a moment. But it was enough to bring on a glazing over of his eyes with enough sadness to feel a deep and dark need to weep. He did not weep but just felt a passing through him of a weeping sadness which made his jaws tighten and his chest feel salted. He felt that he knew it had been all—he could not continue. It was as if it was a matter of thinking about his life—but he could not bring himself to accept that this was a matter to actually consider. He felt water around him and he heard blue winds and he lifted his eyes and saw blue sky and white baby clouds. Fifty per cent of

this experience was psychosis (feeling water around him and hearing winds) and fifty percent was actual and not psychotic (lifting his eyes and seeing blue sky and clouds). He felt he was lying on a beach—the combination did this for him. The combination made him feel only light and soft peace. In this case a circumstantial psychosis was the essence of feeling happy and content. In this case reality was physiologically real in the present moment (seeing blue sky and clouds) and forensic in its ability to move out of the present moment and into a more delicate existence (feeling himself in water and hearing blue winds)—the combination making him feel like he was lying on a beach. There had been beaches in his life. There had been beaches with helicopters and surfs and burning fishing nets in the adjacent villages in the war. There had been experimentation also and not only beaches with blue winds humming in the ears. He seemed to be aware of an ideological war which had transpired during his presence in war and notions of the other side subjecting human beings (whether he comprehended the concept now or not, there was at least an image of human beings before him: an image of his fellows, bars and their white and black hands behind and grasping the cold metal with all internal delight in their souls ground to bits by abusive and interrogative oriental screams and ropes and loosened or removed finger nails and dirt floors in human cages with human defecation and urination to round out the scene) to inhuman experimentation with drugs. And then there was the white counterpart wielding the baton which memory could not erase and the shining white sheets of a maximum security section and post war at that. He had served a collective moral conscience in a war and a collective moral conscience in a prison. Both had rounded him out, created within him an anti-identity, and anti-ego, a jeopardy with the normal precepts and preceptual circumstances in and behind and guiding the everyday life of humankind. No security had been guaranteed except by delusional and popular pretences, and the participants had been his parents and elders both before he was born and after he was born and growing to be—whatever. It had come to end in him now that he had substituted the circumstances of delusional and popular pretences with a psychosis which could be of circumstantial origin just to be looking at clouds and sky, and in the circumstantiality of the substitution lay his victory, and perhaps he had a sense of it. He had never known dire poverty, he had just ended like this—in a terminal sense, dirty and scathed but breathing and walking and groping along mornings in search of food-morsels in trash cans. In this capacity he was not useful to any group of human beings. He groped. He underperformed. Children would meet him in the eye but no others, and even then it was almost only by accident. It appeared that no human connection could transpire with him otherwise, and with the psychotic elements added to this it appeared that no human connection could transpire otherwise in any case with anybody (including all cases in which his own person was excluded). And he felt this in his chest and soul but naturally did not comprehend it—it was a cognate substance in his being with no cognitive value except as a general way of feeling and falling and comprehending other things and the combinations of psychosis and actual reality gave him these experiences of feeling that he was lying on a beach and hearing blue winds, when he was actually only feeling what it would be like to be in water and at the same time looking at the sky and its little baby clouds. It was as if no other way could be

examined in the context of his life; it was not only as if, it was—unless destiny turned something up which contradicted it concretely: in other words, unless he changed and could come out of the place to which he had descended—which was impossible, for he had been down too long and too far and whatever definition a species gives to a man in a terminal sense (when things cannot be altered) was already given to him and actively established—and therefore, it was totally permanent, and if life extended after death, it was perpetual. No God could redeem this tragedy. A consciousness which cannot be given back on the condition of an afterlife (when all others are revealed and given infinite freedom) then there was no justice in a God if there was one, and in an afterlife if such a crass and crude thing could possibly exist after such an unredeemable tragedy. This was the way it was, and the extra tragedy was that he knew it—and this either was to have been permitted or it was a criminal part of his destiny—this was a matter of opinion, and perhaps he could form one. And this (that he could possibly form an opinion on the matter) was the only hope, the only possible thing which could possibly negate the unspeakable tragedy and change him.

He came to the fountain. He felt the latent thirst well up in him. He felt a tropical wind flying over him. His eyes crinkled and his bearish lips smiled. He dipped his now-feminine hand into the calm waters. He drew it to his mouth and sipped at the water with pursed lips. He let a leaf be taken to his lips as he drank. When he had picked it up with the water in his cupped palm he had thought of tea leaves and waited to taste the park-smell of the leaf bedded in water. Its autumn aspect seemed to counterascend the tropical winds which he felt as a matter of psychosis. The counterascension was not unpleasant inside him since one part possessed reality even if the other did not: (there were no extradition treaties between an imagination which had turned psychotic years before and perceptions which still insisted on reality or were bound to even under the worst circumstances.) In the tunnels it had not been possible to experience these things. All had been black and wet and coarse and couldn't stimulate anything with vivid rhythms or colors. Smelling the leaf with his nose (his nose was touching it) he felt a kind of wakening in the feeling of the cool bright sharp sunny morning which ran up his nose like a sunray and the general memories in the grey matter of his brain. Since he had no references because he could recognize none this smell and the mixing memories in his head were like a series of great metempsychotic deeds which defied his hunger and his demoralization throughout decades. The memory: The boys left—behind, he somehow seemed to be aware of them—he felt a lengthening deftness which seemed to carry him back to the four walls which he had inhabited as a boy in his parents' house and then the three with one wall of bars he had inhabited when he had grown beyond what he knew what it meant to be a man: and this brought the return of a memory which had not come to him for many years, that of the fellows he was ordered to remain silent about. At this moment, for the first time in many years, he felt hate, and it was for the white man who had wielded the baton on him in the American prison on American soil. He looked up into the sky and asked the question. But then he felt that he was imagining it all and certainty even if unquestionable could not deter his total defeat and horrific demoralization and for some odd reason he remembered reading Churchill's speech to the Canadian Parliament (some voice from deep down in him, high-pitched and raspy with an

English accent) and the smell of the coffee that his mother allowed him to drink under his early teenage nose and the admiration (or some equivalent, since in this memory he did feel something which had a human warmth but more) he had felt for Churchill at that moment, unusual for an adolescent—and just then with this memory he felt hunger in his stomach real and unquenchable for hot and good food. He wondered if what had happened to his mind had been possible, and he realized that he had a right and correct opinion (and then it was forgotten). He saw a woman (and then did not, but felt her breast in the palm of his hand psychotically, and his vision went) and his ego felt sympathy with his groin for the first time in years. Dead opinion was mixing with sex. In his vision which was gone he wanted to get into that woman and felt a moral repugnance at himself and remembered just who he had become and said: I will go back down tonight. But it was no longer he who was speaking. With a great effort of will (or a great effort of anti-will forcing on will) he convinced himself that the past several minutes had not occurred (or his mind pushed them from the past into oblivion instead—an oblivion which could not exist), and then next thing his eyes were glazed over and staring at the fountain capturing yellow light and he was not aware of the success he had just made with an effort of will which was now exempt from understanding, since his mind was again dull. He had not let it go long enough to realize that his mind was still turning after all of these years and that that was a victory in itself. He was even then able to imagine the Sierras in southern Spain. Victories had been taken away from him and he was left with an imagination of the Sierras in southern Spain which he associated with a white hand wielding a baton. Korea was a green memory which mixed now with the Sierras of southern Spain and the Sierras of southern Spain was a delusional reality principle by which he could adapt himself to his failure. In it all there was the white hand wielding the baton and in the memory of the baton there was what he had accomplished in an armed robbery and a rebellious assault—a negation of how he had been negated as a youth in a war and then as a citizen in his society—and there were trees, old trees, trees which had no memory and trees which had all the memory, and he, a ;;;;;;n atrophied identity with some rehabilitated recognitions, saw men as trees—saw his memories as a mountain range in southern Spain, and Vietnam all tents.

When he left the fountain it seemed something left from him. The light and happy grace of the fountain was like a singular saving device in him in the sense that a saving device was like a life-boat which every time he had looked at it had lowered down into his heart with a warmth of human discourse—and somewhere in him he felt the pity of finding it needful to personify the warmth of human discourse in a fountain. But he accepted it with merely a modicum of knowledge that he was accepting it and loved it but felt the black fear of leaving it. He did not know what it was which drove him away from the fountain but he found himself driven away from it. The grief of leaving the fountain dulled his mind even more and he walked in dragging increments of anti-stride. He remembered how the sewage stuck to his hands down below. He felt the rough cement walls on his hands, the cold metal and the steaming outlets. He hated the white man who wielded the baton on him. He loved the sound of rivers from his childhood—thinking of it, feeling the cold river water swirl around him in whirlpools with his strong swimming arms to fight it and master it, and his

mind felt a pull and a tug and he longed for a smoke—"a smoke" he called it in him without speaking it out. He remembered taking the Pass by storm and cloud and snow-flurry the first of the season before it was closed for that season as it always was, and his girl with him in the four-wheel and pushing the pick-up into gear rolling the pick-up and its differential into the right powers and feeling the control of the gear, just as they had taken villages by storm and fire and rule and just as he had been taken by baton and rope and just as his fellows had been taken by gun-point and held with rope and sharpened green bamboo sitting on straw-matting.

In a blinding psychotic episode he felt the steel of the metal underground and the green and black scum in the sewage and he wished himself back in it before he had even come out of the episode—a monkey feeling came over him and he felt ashamed of himself and wished only for general release from his body or his mind wished it for its own sake since his own feeling of self was either base and delimited-atrophied depending on the situation. He was now living in a grey area—and he had been in it for thousands of days. His somatic aura had become a general function with living memories and bare raw feeling-statutes and white sonds sonds sonds [episode] arnd wart arll a growrl arnd the woldfern wolfern trarma arnd the dark nort night fields folrlds arnd the oncient garns guns [hyper-extension of episode] the trees were green above him as he moved away from the fountain and fucking out of the park into a district [normality]. He walked down the sidewalk of the district and there were many buildings with doormen sometimes and always the electronic voice system. The district was in shade adjacent to the park. The sidewalk was nice and secure beneath his feet. No gaping holes, no city-men, no blue-uniforms, no batons, no feeling—there had been green tents in that general memory before night patrol and for no reason he stared at the sidewalk and remembered IT and saw an explosion in the jungle-ground and growth on the shaded white of the district sidewalk. It shouldn't have been anything that he hated and he didn't hate it. He hated the blown-to-bits limb of his buddy [fellow, friend, . . .] and catching him flying or softening the blow of his flying by being near him because he was his buddy [fellow, friend . . .] He came out of it. The sky was a dull blue under the shade in the district. He looked up at it and laughed under his beard, and heard his laugh getting louder and louder until it was a roar. But the few people in the shady vicinity walking or standing at the doors calling up or guarding heard no roar and didn't even notice him except as an everyday or typical sight. Deep down in his intellect, below the tickings of grey matter, where atrophy of identity had not taken any effect and could possibly not ever take effect, he concluded that things had been mismanaged. This comforted him when no comforting was necessary or when it had no meaning or sense. Comfort was trodding on and anti-comfort was trodding on and trodding on and circumstantial psychosis and flashback and combinations of them were the common haul of his history.

The young man from the youth-prison whom he had defended from the collusion between one of the jailer-guards and one of the prisoners high up in the hierarchy also played an important part in his memory. He had defended the youth just out of the youth-prison when he was sodomized through the collusion of the guards and that prisoner who was high up in "the structure." In prison they called it "the structure." It was indelible and hard and even the warden had

not been able to weaken it and even the warden knew that it was organically necessary to keep order in all American prisons. "The structure" had brutalized the youth from the youth-prison on his first night in the penitentiary. He had felt his buttocks spread open and he was let to be held by the guard. When he had defended the youth one morning from the proddings of the guard to make it up to his cell quickly for a session—he had hit the guard when the guard hit the youth on the back with his baton when the youth had refused with sullen and fierce eyes and had struck out with his arms. When he had hit the guard he had been beaten and tied up and sent down to be beaten and beaten again. The youth had looked at him with blue eyes and he had given the youth a fierce look of approbation as his head went down and took a blow to the forehead which was to say "tolerate it." In the calm shady district on that sidewalk which had opened up before him he had continued to walk under a sky which he looked at as if with constancy and with traces of his old laughing and these memories about the youth and "the structure" and the collusion to exploit the youth came back to him in slow waves of memory. It made him absolutely not recognize the sense of a bra-line which he saw on a woman walking her dog. It didn't make sense to him that people still took care for—and then he knew it was him and his situation. All of his senses had been so disturbed over the years that the physical logic of holding a pair of breasts in delivered in him a sense of not-understanding the need of it or seeing it and not knowing what it was because he would not have been able to see the sense of it if he could have known what it was—but as a circumstantial element it could succeed but in reality failed to activate a sexual imagination. Perhaps a psychotic episode of rape could have come but it didn't, it never had. He didn't remember Denine. He didn't remember the Asian prostitutes. He didn't remember the scream which had no meaning when they made screams in the villages and shut them up with bullets or (but he never had).

He felt a warm trickle of urine run down his legs. He stopped and watched it drip onto the sidewalk and mix into his toes which protruded from his shoes. A woman covered her mouth as she passed him. He actually felt ashamed and wanted to weep and there was no fountain to lift his eyes to and then gaze at but his eyes glazed over anyway and he actually did weep this time. But he was so dull that the tears were as if automatically stifled. But the woman had had such a pretty face and he felt the shame and found himself wishing she could have known what he had done and been through before he had come to this state. But his wishing was not understood or comprehended by him as he did it, since it was some small ticking voice which did the wishing and left the balms and salves of his demoralization (unconsciousness and unawareness of social realities) intact and clean. This was in fact the origin of his psychoses and the little ticking voice knew it was the origin of the psychoses and the little ticking voice was the little bit of him that knew he was still alive but which he himself did not know about. It was what kept him alive. His finger had held pressure on the trigger of the machine gun in the war also even when his mind slept but when he could in several hours participate in human society but which he could not do now.

He wished he were in Cuba fishing for Marlin. He wished time were different and oceans would come to life. He wished he were not too far down and knew that he was too far down. He continued to walk down the sidewalk of the shady

district adjacent to the park. The trees continued to flower above him. The sky continued to be dull-blue and he continued to be dull-him. There was nothing to fix his gaze on except district-things. He had forgotten the time and he had never known it but the hunger was not applying in him still. Hunger for sea-food still had not applied as it often did in the late afternoon even down below. He thought: "Peanut-butter on tuna." And then hunger for sea-food had applied. It was late afternoon. Sunlight began to break through the eaves and shine on him the feeling of things ending for most but beginning for him but when he would have to be looking out for city-men and police unless he were in the place where he belonged, that is to say in alley-ways or properly prostrate in the open gutters or spread-legged against the walls of a bank sufficiently flooded in his own urine to justify his position there and keep the city-dogs far hence. Hunger for sea-food had applied and all he could do was moisten his mouth and urinate just a tiny tinkling and short squirt which went unnoticed by all and himself. "Peanut-butter on tuna," he repeated in his brain. But more properly he felt the cold walls and the slimy faeces black and yellow in the sewage lines. More properly he felt the insane complexities which he had become the carrier of and that he had taken it like a hit and it was a hit which his society had done.

His mind left reality and a fearful psychotic episode passed into his mind and he stood under the trees on a cement path facing away from the fountain as if transfixed: There was a ring and in the ring there was a man with a whip running around the ring and a tiger chasing the man, and there was a dark-haired woman with a white dress lying in the ring, fallen from the walls surrounding the ring; and he, he was astride one wall around the ring grieving for the woman who had been his, and he called her by her name and deliberated on whether he should let himself fall into the ring and die from the fall also, or whether it was worth living. The tiger and the man continued to run in circles, neither touching the other one. Then it (the episode) stopped and he looked up at the trees and the green fell into his heart but did nothing more in addition and so the dullness and stripped vulgarity inevitably returned. He continued walking and thought that he might die for a cigarette. But the repetitive dullness and stripped vulgarity had returned. From then on until the next fluttering heart-attack took his life forty-eight hours later, he saw nothing but walked in sleep and the writer does not know where he died but only that decentralized images passed across his mind for forty-eight hours like a fugue, and that they were real at the moment he reverted to that place—it was insane, insance, insounce, it was his primary and primordial memorial to all and sundry all for the good of all human kind past and present, and in respect to this chilling need for integrity the writer will not expose his subject in this matter of just what passed through his subject's mind, for his subject is a saint and must not be compromised.

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Seventyfive million in these wars gone forty years and saddened and no longer humen; no longer humen; no longer humen; and still trying to strocture a world; these are questionable actds. I talking to you capman did yar intend thart claim? Thou'rt messed you know. Thou'rt dirtied and foold. It warnt nothing more than yar own mind, and yar hand arnd head had fargotten that...and thart was bad 'cause ya come round but by one round chance arnd not arnother thart card ever be possible, and tharn we at an end...but yar legacy, which are stronger than nature, and thererfore damnable, far the first time in harstory.

Arnd I gart to say my peace. I carnot wait no longer. Hard I intended nar more than ar global overviewr sarnce wharch ah parch thart. Arnedtended I to make my resarch so tharough thart ar I ward add key events wharch stard out arf thar harstorical carnnon. Arn my assarrmptions je are that ww ar parch that.

But it are all dead. For what to conintue. Far I walkand this i a straight larn arnd describe and that carncentration camp here aarnd now. Cry Wolf yar darty underweared rodboy happyface in yar parliament thart war a stolen ambience frarn our farms arnd communities in the begarning befay yar came. Call me a charlatan but thart aint true cause I darnt exist and I darnt dare. Listen to Mr Stimson Mr Truman, nar yar breed is dead bart yar had a bad smell in it all wharn ya cracked yar ass at the world – arnd then yar mocked the bread Stimson! Take warkinprocess 3800 out arf inventory 7800 yar general motors company fould policymannual arnd yar make them all inidirect and carn ya count better thart way what ya got besides the human who yar normally only known on the line or arn yar wall in yar configurations. Nar you wouldn't understand but yar will when yar get a handle on subjunctives arnd i aint to bargain with me scots precepts since thar ar gravity ararnd a truthsign arnd the carnditions call foul or right fairlry. It twar a fine lament it tewart ar deontic strain which had become a knot and a not in the brain arnd the alethic indarstrial arnd common struggle hard a find harmony but war taken on consignment. When we return to the moss thart consignment warl transformorfigy and in that act die. I know thart like I know thart arll the philosophic rant lay wasted in technicalities arnd war genocidal frarn the begonning. So it are now to make a statement arnd grasp the grammatical. I card rant till time unend and parelley I will. Thar arnt no blind calll in the rant cept when it be done by a blueeyed rodboy or a one of his converts done when the blueeyed rodboy war older arn dmore experienced and quieted by hars material gains: Listen to Mr Stimson Mr Blackman Mr Indianman Mr Asianman Mr Muslimman Mr ManfromBrazil Mr Occidental Poetman. Close yar ears satroC arnd do what yar can curse ya still can tharart proven metal. Yar teivos doctors. Seenow a firstorder logical predicate statement carn interact with a statistic tomake a strike, a Commune, or a European Jew read like a barcoad to cashin on the opaque grimstone of lamp-filtered light by human skin or gold extracted like foriniacal goldrush when cave is mouth. Yar, arnd swaht. Yar capitaist pig yar "accounts" in yor fould manuals are too heavy on the world arnd we got pygmies now (Stimson, yar art rat again!). Yar gonna burn in hell, believe me that like we now believe the etching and poetic bloke William Blake, or say his words to our needs when we read. "There was no purely military target" Mr Truman yar hit the citycenters with women and children and the unborn but conceived, or was it because the "japs in all are savages, ruthless, merciless and fanatic, we as the leader of the world for the common welfare carnot drop that bomb on the old capital or the new." Arnd yar had it agreed with Mr Stimson Mr Truman arnd either yar knotted mind or his influence could not keep thart dog

in yar brain farhence. Signifcantly, you lied in yar own diary or yar had no predictive powers in line with your weak consciene. Thart ar more of shame than to lie in public cause that proves you arn indecent wretch. Scuuse me if I take liberties but yar got it inculcated in me, bart I got no plea for excuses like Austin when he plibly represents his liberal and moralistic modalities. Arnd yar philosoperh out there can say I misinterpret, but yall misintrepret daily that are yar bread and butter that yar don't know about arnd if you are rare you may know it and you got to accept the insanity, in a diary on the usefulness of the disintegration of the atom in the first round was written "fire destruction prophesied in the Euphrates Valley Era, after Noah and his fabulous Ark." Midwest America bred a habberdashery monster who went a bit higher than his judgement should have warrented. Who war the real agent Mr McCarthy? I swear the whiteman is the worst. Verbatim I got this man: "make no avowals to your henchmen lest you risk sentence or revolution." My wife and I it was so cold that day that we went into the forest with poverty crawling at our backs and sadness wetting our hearts like the shade froze the snow to a kind of hard white rock and it did. We cried and then we walked up an incline crunching snow out of the forest onto the high ground and walked across the long stretch of snow where a big barn stood which was sundrenched all across the highground field. We stopped at an oak or a birch or a beech I do not know which it was a winter tree and I sat and she stood and waited. We went back to town. It was so cold that day my nose was feeling the pain drift up into my facial cavities and the skull was aware I am sorry to say. I suppose it had to be the same with my wife. It was another day that was the worst of all. With not enough economic space for capital to interact with the public at large we took the hits. And it all goes back to the human cannon fodder starting in the early part of the 20century by the 'complex relations', and my wife followed me and she could not hold herself together in fact it was much worse. It tore me apart and dragged me under. Now I understand they are building the world's largest dam in China which will cost twenty-six billion in dollars and over a million in displaced people. It would have been the same with my undone history of a chain of events when Truman listened to Stimson and Nagasaki went up in flames and it was the second! I do know from my absentee reading that the corporation goes back to the middle ages arnd thart old ethos of patience thart did imply intellogence wars thart first enemy againstit call it Robinhood. Ar do know thrt artlest in the written antigone parmformed funeral rites over har didded brother Oedipus arnd th thelakjf defied orthodoxy. Itwar w so difficult thart winter. We were heard and we were exposed arnd the people war cold arnd evil in this afterwar. We chroston gentils we proch unity looking for the prize arnd in our circles we are par a part to apar par practive practice schadenfreude. Argaustr 10 th two men war in accord. I warl not obsess thiss. It war enough thart it war that made them fire ther brons to a decision thart the crater war 6fetdeep 1200fet in the circle arnd I jost wonder wot they thought of man and if they thought of woman cept maybe ars a hole. Yar marn of no origin yar men of narxt to ath the thunder I say to you a creed can be put down on paper arnd a Dearwin carn utlize ar Manyregardsmalthus. Even now war ar got 900 pows unaccounted for in dar Koaraea arnd unhafter thar 1953 armistics and yar men of the narxt to the thunder carn you tell me thart they wernot used for certain medical terms mby the soviets in their languishment? This harstory are mine under a history of use arned impure but impeccable application in wharch I arned me kind war the vicitms. Yar caronot tell me thart every war arnd cirriminal catact in harstory arenot sufficiently referenceed to be foundn out and expelained. Instard and thereine we got whart should not happen after, arnd by that I mean yar experimentum and yar in copore arnd yar vile, and by that the daily machivaleism. One day I was walking in the forests and a hare jumped out of its

warm pocket in the side of the forest-fjord. Another I was walking three kilometres further north and I came down from the tilled wintery earth and into a long distance hollow which went another kilometre. There was a hunters' tower stood out of it and a kind of makeshift but intelligently wrought netting strung up to the right level of tightness at its points of fastening on the five or so cut-wood pillars. There were beer bottles all around and trash. Thar ar gravity arand a truthsigh arnd the carnditions call foul or right fairlry. Som say ho oho. Your killer instincts gart yar ears and all your other senses from your somatic cavities. Som say ho oho. Some say oh oho we have discovered the most terrible bomb in the history of the world it may be the fire destruction prophesied in the Euphrates Valley Era, and on his little brain went. Some democratised citizens of the academe write history like it was a game where all the conventions were clear. I walked and then I came down a little hill into the coloury trees near where in the shade in the gorge a creek ran quietly. When we took the ridge the moon was full and gave daylight visibility to the light snow cover. Losses were heavy. We stopped counting the Chinese at 150 and estimated it at 700. One Chinese, sitting as if half-dead with an atrocious chest-wound against a stooped pine, was alive and tried to detonate his grenade. A gunner saw him and shot him in the head before he could do it. That night we listened to broadcasts of songs like White Christmas. We shared photographs of wives and children and girlfriends and parents and brothers and sisters. We ate tomato soup from tin cans. There was sufficient supply of smokes. I knew the Chinese did not celebrate Christmas. I knew they had a different religion, they called it Communism. I tried to be just, they were different people with different traditions. Even to people who I had to fight and kill. I used to think, "After all, it is a war of ideologies." But then it was in front of my face that we fought on physical territory. "Got your pictures, Joe?" "Sure I got em." I brought them out from an inside pocket of my jacket. "Got yours, Mac?" I said. "You bet." We shared our photographs with eachother. The sharing got quiet and reflective and carried the night like a snowy wind, if I may be so poetical. Then Mac said, "They're all dead, Joe." "I know. You know it too. Us or them and you ought not to talk like that. Get that right. See your girlfriend in the picture? She's there. You want her?" "Of course I want her." "Then stay alive and think right." "Merry Christmas to you Joe." "We took the ridge right. What's the matter with you? Get it straight!" "I know. But that one against the pine. Dumb bastard, I don't know." "You can't question those kinds of things, Mac." "I know. It's selfish. But I question. He was the last left. He had a breath in him. And then my bullet. You know?" "It was your bullet?" "Yeah." "My God, he could have taken out any number of us. Be proud, for Christ. The bastard had it coming. Don't you know that?" "Damn right he did. Damn right. I guess I don't know what the hell I'm saying. What the hell am I saying? Christ." "Be careful of that kind of thinking, Mac. You got to get things right! No other way." "I will. Thanks Joe." The night carried on like a very old wind. We listened to Christmas carols over the shortwave. It was as if you could feel the hustle and bustle at home. The green and red Christmas glow in their chests and eyes. The tomato soup was a substitute for nothing and only gave the stomach its due needs. The smokes kept us going. They were better than orders, and in many ways like them: haught haught, get it going, cast a line in the deep dark pool, shoulder your gun, march with good boots.

There were an hegelian answer to it all in the trees of yer lands, and an ethical criterion that were as material as the sky or a dewy-dawn in a copse on a hill. Arnd there were an hegelian answer to it all which yar could understand without that man Chaucer and what he littled and bigged on parchment of the laden femaile deer (thart leman! And the mans companion falcons!) bearing the human-elk to the lake edge. If they wernt nothing

you in this day and age you could do it right and see it cleasrlyl, and farck the six fruit
 filled chocaltcs the lazy apparatus of money-content. And when you could no longer
 focus on yer species, what couldn't you do but lament. But mar dar nerves get shot inside
 and my gut is fulll of hcemical faear. Coudnt I have been ready for a war by thirty wary
 years, all ar my youth a dead sounnd foalling in the floor, pathos arnd remonstrance
 debated in a single mind, knowing that his youngest were vanquished in the hymen
 gone? If yar cold can the *k on teh borgeou set arnd bury the bleeding needle in teh
 groujdnd yar head might be clenaed. That white sonofabitycgch strutting his authorass
 in the foreground in his centuriesdead canon of dearth adn his destructions on his
 kindcreaturcs the schock the speare the more than kin than kind and the oldbeaten
 hamlet, words, words, sir, didnt ya know the pumping of yar heart does bearthem original
 and not politley contorted kn yaraein in yar senile politik. Stand head on ass and blind
 yar stave, poked out are yar odeipal eyes, arnd now yar logic are a brth of a frustration
 between an emotion and a thought, ironkin crime: premeditation, passion: blind and
 blinkknng new. Starndit wareentitall grimlycriml thartpart sedmdamile (chick chick
 chick chick chick) con con con j f sonds und sonds a sonds tch tch tch tch fornicallcal
 revmoval of mullars corpporate ultra vires the histiocal cry chim chim o the circumstantial
 psychosis of daily life by minute aproaching a fixed cart with a tyranncial driver weed it
 all in deception the ironic comment what lukac what hegel what hume naid. Csome gart
 the bunches of poooeperin their pockets, seesome note, thart crimson lake whart
 a farcing nargotion, loke, loke, yer see those notes, if yar could can te h terror act on teh
 borgeou set, what ironic comment would be red and liquid. I arm bad to say it, I arm good
 to say it, celine walked, a cumul fact that they rack up in piles and push over into the
 ditch, our great commune socieity pucshed over into a ditch and no metaphor, no, no
 methaphor here. Criml yert forty factories we will, and the criml will be the right. Criml
 com chip chip chip, seet his word, Ill caram iot upo oyour arse. Wartch the the autohor
 write, thart chipin cdaele chap. Gart no onconventions to distort the farty fact thart the
 hand wrotes. Screw, wood, fastener, lever, that iisrhereinalll wherein I find hit hard to
 state the ccraft.tion.tion.so I belittle the paperl with my shnfullstops. Good author, good
 dog, good god, he wont fear yer talk and rot. Rotten mock of the charred heart, that chest
 doth burn the mind with a greivous headache. Wart thumb waht chin, one digit one
 bumpy knoll, one lake in winter run in with a forest peninusla in the shape of an
 arrowhead, smoke, smoke there by that lake, and breathe in the cold air, the lungs are
 mortal. Culdnt you comptelate teh destruction of teh industrial set, we alll who wheare
 it and feel i tssa tr do. Coff coff I belittle what I big on the paperl. I shard my clothes on
 theriver, where they bathe and violint not with falschifying on paperl where on paperl it
 si is to record what hard the truthaoehif to had been. IclaimIfitwera the human need that
 were athonly concerne I owuld sought and sought. Ahh climate. Quiock that ready mon
 with the machine gun harns a tree t his own, a sond and a sond and sand Icera bathe and
 turn flour over earth and given heat. . I shard my chlothes onthe river where they bathe,
 where it is renewal and not paperl, sond and sond and sand and the black breath new as
 a fresh rose on dew, ifadart the human need wertheone of our conecernes, O claimy me
 I would sought and sought with warply tears and a movinghand and a breathing chest.
 Ahh climit. A plastic mask for the man who wields. I wasnotin the askin tehse things fore
 the gheto ro the broken home and the gheto did hurt and the broken familyark were
 a loving grief to those who hurtin. Shuld I have witnessesd a moral deed whente sound
 was not yet sound? There are a way to can a waht ye will even whente desire for the
 hume en aid is a broken but so wanted. Make is aid aid is make and the trees in these

woods harnken and old muse for the explicatoin of history, Ike the grandfather clock a'ti'kin' s'rong cod I song possied knowledge. It war so cold tht day we had to make the walkin' in the old snow without food enough just noodles and beans and potatos n the time when the bipolar world had splite in three and then came one rush of exploit on us 99 from 100 (and we wre only two withone youngn-) and the genuine human feeling cannot be statistically measured unless honestly done and this is yet stochastic. An atlantic reek off old madekett lowelly done the winchint on the fence of the old widow's hill where a tent pitched was not a notion conceivable. Me's it happy the way he read his poetry and stamped his onion words when talking to students about vietnam. Pareely he was not in teh askin also befoer the deceit. Pareely he was familyneurosed and culled from that the political antarctica of his amazing work. When we drive throuh the snow the winding road is cool with the surrounding forests. Bu en we drive we cannot daraft a destoination arnd a as we are humen we cannot draft a song. Me is the song a litling parchment for the voice t do. Me is it a cartesian graft in the rosy li lung. Ike were a'ti'kin' Nixon were a tin soldiers comin and the comin rush of exploit after he had dne his kant after impeachment adn death. It wernt the men in the snow that iddid it though they hated more the man but loved more the earth it were the complex. My muse is open in the woods and the great clearings set my jaws tight with the awe of the sky overhead adn I can move a mountain. What is no longer necessary is no longer right in belief and in act but what does a man of old thought do when faith depresses the soud. Cana say 'world geneologies of censorship and language referencing here tides maybe, tithes (pun, no-pun) willy-nilly?' Bind himself to the Earth. Marnd grandfather wars a fisherman and an ingeneer. Carst his flyrod with grace he did. Gemrinal downstream trout he could art the catch and tugging hook in the gill. Nart a bit more arnd he could clean it on the rocks wth equal grace as the cast and tehwo white stationwagon stood with all the necessecities and censoring tools. A bear came that night and I jumped in to the old white wagon. (The woman, but the woman and the man "you heard what the bishop said and we're cooking potatos I say some action." "you can be hungry and in jauail and that would be great for all three of us." She whispers to herself without stopping the tuddling over the yellow stove "men make thirty years wars.") Marnd grandfather liked the Greeg and his mountain composition we are had it at our wedding woman and I but now the false bishop says from a parliment and make pedophiliac underground. That walke that day in the snow into the woods my wife and I it was so hard (bear-hard, a laughing bare proposition greedy for love and homer but soaked in melenchol) and the sun was the worst enemy of man (since nothing could please) but made the eyes relieve on the hard white snow under the great red brick barn we many unknown metres from it. ("You can eat first anyway. Potatos are action." And they serve themselves. They have faith in the true bishop.) Narnd carnd understand what hegel said about the sophist behavior in which makes us without hume naid neither the true bishop though he may make practice of it. "It's necessary, we're hungry." Revollutionar necessity is red as hume naid nay to the naysers if you please sir thart cudgel arty dead who said science was a light source please and not bundled in Ingsoc if you please O'Brien? Gable Hedda n idea and shot but could not wrote: Playthings the child's toys thumbd into Winston's mind, or Note: I can't anymore today. † The great eastern basin archipel I just want to write one good sentence since I cannot be convinced that anything can be viably attested to except language and the basic human needs and the sun which literally gives life. The sophist expression is personal reasoning on a subject which has no relation the hume en aid and need. Which bishop will we be lead by. A stong unnatural beast or a robed robust matador.

*I cannot go on, but no doubt parraeley I will sure as the milky way will flow into the womb in some mien till the end of time. Io remember the day in the snow with the A woman stands at a stove cooking. A cold ---*** what the fuck is †*

He woke up and the light was empty. As the fluttering heart attack began to take his life and left him strangled for breath, death was a reminder in the end, and he was satisfied with this somehow. Even if he wasn't exactly aware of it overtly. The eyes in the head were unable to recognize external reality. It had all been a dream. The cold, his hunger, his thirst, the snow, the sun, the earth. There was a damaging document that he had whole in his mind, a mental document which carried the weight of the person. Nothing had been written down. It had all been internally worded. The light rushed into his eyes and blinded him. DEATH. The schizoid thought which passed through his mind was that he had made a statistical measurement of the genuine human idea and the genuine human feeling. The sun blinding his eyes with nuclear heat, he was reminded of films of the Los Alamos blast. He was reminded of Oppenheimer's filmed speculation that after the deeds of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it was questionable as to whether we could even call ourselves human anymore. A sliver of text came to his mind, something he had read some years before, before he had sunken so deep, from the off-the-shelf collection at the university library. It came from Harry Truman's diary. He didn't think *before Korea*. He remembered it precisely: "We have discovered the most terrible bomb in the history of the world. It may be the fire destruction prophesied in the Euphrates Valley Era, after Noah and his fabulous Ark." He said something to himself, a murmur, as he got up from the ground, even as the slow act of death began to take him. He slid from a forty-degree angle to an easier angle shifting up towards sixty, a more comfortable and less blinding angle. He would have interrogated and trolled himself as to the substance of his murmur, but he could not. But he would not dispossess himself of it, which was remarkable, so he lipped. HE LIPPED. Then it was suddenly unimportant. He could hardly imagine that he was really remembering and repeating what he was indeed remembering and repeating. And then he was dead as stone.

Winter 1995—Summer 2008

SPEAKING TO A WOMAN

And then, *what if?*

And then what if a poem was like a walnut, and that the only important thing was that it got written down. Well it was that, before I learned the truth about wartime vivisections. Before I learned that prison is the ultimate edifice. Before I was able to imagine a man on the cement ground of Guantanamo Bay, rolled up in a ball, layers of clothing around him, dark skin, his ribs pulled in like the external parts of a sea shell, his arms wrapped around his head, being kicked by black policing boots, hit with white batons — several guards, several interrogators, a band of clappedclapping morons, yet this sea-shelled man knowing he has the moral sanction and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on his side. All the way from Gdansk to the clerical, these trees have the longest memory. From Solidarity to the Vatican. From death squads to liberation theology. From Arab vassal regimes to radical Islam. From genocide in Palestine to Hamas: yes, I know I have broken a taboo here. Remember this. And remember much more. Remember that we are not dead yet and that there is more to say; and that as long as there is more to say, we are not dead. Forgive me for breaking that taboo, Mossad, it fit into my scheme of things at the moment of writing, you see, a writer cannot help these things, and for that he is certainly a cruel interrogator. Still, I was not part of the conspiracy, right? I mean the general one, the one that bespeaks the universal Diaspora. I lament uncontrollably and without literary forethought; therefore: 'There was a story, and the story was of a nation. Goddamn, don't let it go. It is the only thing that will save you. Stendhal, modern social Cardinals. Hume-en aid.'

But this is just the beginning of a literary understanding of our recent history and our own American Gulag. A man watching his television after work must one day consider that at the present rate of things statistics are showing that on average 1 in 147 Americans are incarcerated at any one time in federal and state penitentiaries. When he watches the news, he must think about this, because that is the reality behind the news he is watching; his news. One day he must think about Show Trials as well when he hears men like a fundamentalist US Attorney General who thrives on civil kills and that very stink of civil death that rises from them, extemporizing brazenly but without knowledge on individuals who are actually victims of our domestic conflicts that get inextricably connected to individual instances of our international presence: i.e. the scapegoats like John Walker Lindh, labeled by the American media-whore as if he were a new kind of insect and not a human being who might have another story to tell and might

not have done anything legally wrong: "American Taliban John Walker Lindh. . . " *blah blah*. When the man watches the news he must one day think about these things. So write. Regain. Fuse beauty with literary determination — passion and precision on paper. Do not stop thinking and feeling. Write.

Write, September wine, winter squall. Mine is a case of miraculous exile. Saint Jude's epistle might even clear my eyes. I also carry a burning pencil in my hand. It etches with fire into the parchment and I am the pillar of that reigning exile. A touch of urine on the left nipple is better than a charm or a loadstone but speaks the same daily rite of "I do not give a shit, my exile reigns, let peace reign and fuck you bastards. I'll crawl through your garbage and pull you under." But please do not be too quick to understand me.

The mares are wrapped in blankets around their middles and move upright on all fours but slowly. I look to see if their sides are bulging. They are. Soon there will be colts dancing around and pulling in beneath mother for sustenance and care. Meanwhile I am watching the blackout of man. (At the intersection of memories of domestic wars [Waco, Ruby Ridge, Los Angeles, Oakland, et. al.] and foreign wars and the civil death of a civilian existence we are being blacked out. When combined with the words of the present, memories bode. We're made that way.) I drive on. Farmhouses. Quarries. Slaughterhouses. Train stations. Mills. Places where I can stop the car, turn it off, get out, and listen. Usually to the wind in the trees, which is often very loud the way wind can be in trees because the forests are so dense where I drive. (Hersh, journalist as terrorist, says Mister Perle. Does anybody remember this?) Because bread did used to be 3 koruna per loaf, 5 hellers for an onion, the way families ordered in bulk and also a barter fashion. And there *are* equivalencies to those barter and bulk old hands in the Western countries, yes do try going back 25 years and list what you remember about candy and hardware stores. You see *we* entered corporate global influenza with the former Soviet satellites and republics, and they entered it with us: the implosions of a oneness. We all suffer from the same tumor and it affects all in the same way. In eastern Europe not all of what was good has disappeared. There are some havens left, but they are always localized small nearly self-contained climates or silos such as certain train stations, wood mills, small farms, slaughter houses, other of the quieter operations that can go relatively unnoticed. They are so quiet still that they do not even feel like they were ever constructed, they feel as if they had always been there, timeless, erected by Benevolence itself. Because now constructions are rampant and there is an event horizon for every one of them: The construction of an edifice exhibits the linguistic limits of the physical, deny it and face your Maker. That is killingly recidivist, Mr. Gilmore, Mr. Mailer, say it isn't so: so it includes physical incarceration, a prison is an edifice: serving a collective moral conscience in civilian life as well as in life as a prisoner, the existence of institutional white sheets, of handcuffing, of baton beatings, and of maximum security sections in federal or state penitentiaries is in this time of the white curtain a greater fathomer of the social rules and norms we live under than any other except economic terror or blatant psychological harassment. Deny this, and 'run the scrimmage of epistemic fraud' against your fellow human beings. Any fathomer may want to forensically capture the

aftermath of such a scrimmage (such a pogrom)—capturing in memory or by the simple act of witnessing or recording on paper the scene of a violent and senseless crime: Then refuse to do the laundry of a collective moral conscience that has incarcerated you to begin with, even if it means entering into a State of quasi or fully legal jeopardy with an irrational state: Then mentally migrate from this state of state-sponsored citizen-penury. What more can they do to you when you have come this far? Not as much as they could before. If you write and you have come this far, you are a guardian of justice in literary creation.

I have written to incriminate, and to letter my position, and I have written for an angel: So go ahead, dig-up the blood-strain in my Spanish roots, Catalan blond Jew, to help you, and then proceed to label me an enemy of the people and paint a star on my sleeve. Because I am so sick. Of the mental and physical measles that the pulverizers want us to wear like a poor man's clothing, no, like a sick man's jaundice, a poor man's clothing is a part and the parcel of his most important possessions. And soharve I wlwrite mre. Criml wit, Truman, kerf ye: like a sick man's jaundice, Stimson. Ye cracked yer arses on the round green globe. Kerf ye. Farck ye, wanker, Himmler, Goebbels, Eichmann, you men of the Arrow Cross. And now on to you, Rumsfeld: Why did I strip? To put on the wet suit. Then in water, I evolved. I wrote several tomes on canary diseases that later contributed to further research into bird diseases, with practical results. That's why I stripped, that's why I junked the bartender, that's why I knifed the guard in the mess. That's why we fight in wars, woman. That's why we like guns. Strip, Truman, FosterDulles. Rumsblood-onthefield, strip, Attorney Generalissimo Arschloch, strip. Bend over and take it like men, boys. Then we shall have to detain you. Now lay your money down, i.e. name your accounts, I've got your bar money already. Woman, take the bar money from these three scumbags, you labored, it's yours. Now it's time for me to go, woman, I've got to ramble. Dress these three scumbags up like J. Edgar Hoover in Drags, someone will eventually find them. I'm going to ski in now, I'll skirt.

Woman, there's a related story. Involves a man mainly, and non-man with human form. Do you know what his word was? *Proshloe*. That means *the past* in Russian. Russian is a good language, like every other, but he appropriated this word. That *was* his word, woman, and there was a place in the world, where you have been in your dreams only (I would hold your hand there as well if you would hold mine), and there the pine jacks like shy and quietly stunned or even still-borne wildfire on both sides of a sand-strewn path there up high above the flats of the lower forest; and then the path ends, woman, nominally—for the observer looking in but not daring to walk in—yes, for such an observer . . . ends in an aerial point. . . floating, woman, floating like a distance-ridden hovercraft (imagine such a thing, *iyyyt* is horrid) that had been forced to become a component of the horizon itself, and exactly where were you to continue further on, woman—you would come nearer to the hectare-ridden basin of reeds and migrating water-fowl. And then tyranny sank in there, woman, it must have. No one could know, there were only rumors, rumors of a stink of madness, and that it came from a woodsman who knew the woods better than anyone and had everything booby trapped. Well that was the story, anyway. No one could say

whether it was true or not. They only knew that some trappers had gone in some twenty years ago and had never returned, and that later, years later, woman, a couple of trappers had gone in with their rucksacks and that they also didn't come back, and were never turned up anywhere else. Woman, I mean *no* party went in beyond that horizon to search for them. Even the government with its special forces was not willing to try to put out the fires of what even they were not sure was local folklore or the real thing, whatever that might be. But that is another story, woman. But wait, woman. One year things came to a head. A man with a long beard was seen coming in to a local shop to buy tins. Of course no one had seen him before. He paid and went. And disappeared. No one followed him. But they saw the direction he went in, and the particular path he took—it was the one that went up in the direction of the sand-strewn path, there where the forbidden horizon lay out not to be touched. But again, that's another story, woman, and I don't want to go deeper into it now.

But related to this, woman: "Prison is a structure." I emphasize that. "It has as many turns in it as a man's mind and life. It is a mirror-reflection of America in historiographical terms." And one does more than read in prison, woman: Because, woman, "The rules of the unit were tight. Capture meant physical torture and a mental makeover. The recording of geographical data and the interception of communications were their major activities:" and that was Laos in 1968, woman, much in preparation for Johnson's supply to our intelligence men of a surplus of bombs for a massive five year blight. But to continue, woman, it was like this: "All interceptions were to be recorded on tape or transcribed. It was rarely possible to make radio transmissions of the recorded data so they needed to keep it with them. They were not permitted to compromise their superiors, so if they were captured they were not to break—they were to bite on their cyanide tablets before a hand could touch them or a bullet wound them—which actually meant that they were not to be captured. None of them bit their tablets when they were taken. This was during his second tour. The techniques of torture varied. Different men had different ways of dealing with it. Torture was not something that could be "dealt with," but there were forms of control which a man could exercise over it. He used memory as his main tool. When inflicted he selected certain memories which he intuitively knew would be the best for the task. The counter-techniques to torture were acts of intelligence of a greater sort than the gimmicks and contrivances of torture itself. He had known this and also used this as a tool. It helped to strengthen his mind's control over his body. Physical memories were not the only memories which he used. He used non-physical memories which meant imagining how something had been. He would think of certain great people, more often than not it was Tolstoy. He did think of Gandhi also, but he could not get the same humanity that he felt as when he imagined Tolstoy's physical image which often went in combination with Tolstoy's social innovations and theories.

He would remember essays that he had read on Tolstoy's Lear-like qualities. This helped him. He could think of a man who had tortured himself in his later years but was as human as to be in self-contradiction, and apply this as the condition of his torturers, and pity them for it, as he pitied Tolstoy for his



masochism, much in the way that Turgenev, he confided to himself so often and so mournfully—that husband of comfort— never could have. But there was a limit to these kinds of memories. Physical memories were often more useful because they were more comfortable and less strenuous—they were not controversial to differing ways of thought, as were most of the non-physical memories. Remembering rafting was very good. Remembering wild animals in the mountains, often a bear he had seen running when he was a boy, was very good. His unit commander, Captain Applebead, had others ways. He was a Soviet specialist with a Masters degree in

Kremlinology. He was obsessed with the past and Meyers never trusted him. Because, woman, war always comes before prison, before flat-out physical incarceration; and war is an open variable, it need not be covert operations in Laos and Cambodia under the evil eye of H.K.: it can be a police war against a ghetto community. Because, woman, “torture was like a thicket: you couldn’t see through it, and you were bound in by it since you had been caught on the wrong side of it (not by the enforcement of the rule of law but by varying degrees of chance then appropriated by convenient definitions as reason for and validation of the torture †). He passed a note one day. It was like passing a stool when they didn’t notice it. But on that day he was found out and his comeuppance was dreadful. In the years that followed he could not think of not remembering it. He would tell it to a few when he was quite stoned. He had wanted to specialize in the area of torture-preparedness later but he had been refused because he had begun to keep company with the wrong people, as when he was stoned. Mostly it was the officers who did the torturing. They were the ablest and he never did tell everything he knew. Neither in Laos nor in America when he had wanted to specialize but was turned away with a kind of oblique military legerdemain that frightened him more than he had ever been frightened in actual field situations. (It was this final obliqueness that eventually turned him to Orwell.) Even later he would simply steal. That time, when he stole for a living, had been the end, and—which at that time in the past he had known—the logical continuation of Laos and Cambodia for him.” He was released from prison in 1978, although nominally it had happened much earlier. Have I lost myself woman? Hold my hand and I will hold yours, I beseech you. Because 1978 was more of a personal water-parting. Let me pause, woman. Hold me tighter, please. Because, but: He is dead now woman, died on the streets of New York in 1980. He has a story to his

† In the US we call that a violation of the 4th Amendment.

life, woman: and it is written. It was lettered by me. I hope you will read it some day, that I may tell it to you. But just wait one last minute, woman, please. *You remember, he never trusted Applebead.* "In his stupors *Applebead*—*Applebead* was able to get primitive alcohol because of his relationship with the chief captor—sometimes mumbled and repeated the verbal emission *proshloe* as another man mumbles the name of an old nemesis. . . rocking back and forth like an insane specimen creature of pity and contempt in a squatting position on the bamboo floor." It bears to remember I am sad to say. Again, I hope you will read it some day. But that is a different story from this one, in any case: in our case, and we are entitled to it, the whale is entitled to his blubber, needs it, woman, like he needs that blow hole on his shiny top. But you see, it is being caught on the right or the wrong side of a thing, woman: that USSCIVILRATION Act, and Generalissimo Arschloch to do the killing of it; and that man, the man whose story I lettered, well he was on the wrong side of things, and by accident, it wasn't his doing (except by the degrees of freedom in daily life and individual actions that were inherently subject to externally imposed definition—is that clear, woman? I hope people will know it). He was serving that collective moral conscience under some real war men, and then civilian men and govmen. That pressure aches. Well how many will fall now on the wrong side, with this totalitarian Act that they call the USSCIVILRATION Act? I ask you, woman. . . to think about it. Or get inside the whale, quick. If they take away my civil blubber, what do I do? They can't take it away, they can only thief: then I migrate, woman, mentally if I can't physically, but physically if I can also do it mentally.

In any case, woman, do not pray for me, I can can the faacker: Imagine I am sitting in front of a judge. I say to him, 'You think you are so righteous. You ascribe to me a moral vacuum because I was all-too-human in a bar. All I can do is pass judgment on you.' So I piss on him. Because I am protected from evil, woman: I have a bear, he is blubber and ferocity. It is visceral, as visceral as the most moral of written documents under any conception of God and Man, he is ber and clain at the same time, by definition: I say, 'Sir, The Factories and the Fields. Lyndon Town. Ameeeeerrrika, Sssrrrr. Well, Milord, it's like this: you wouldn't understand: you can sentence me: put me to bed. I'll sleep. But then I'll wake up someday in your head and you'll know it's me.' You may call me superstitious, woman, but then I am only a man. When I evolve in water, woman, this ber is my facemask, for the under water wading, it is oiled like the fur hide of the walrus, and I grow tusks like no man ever seen. So there is no superstition, only water, and my eyes peel at it, and I make it good. I am a mammal after all, and that is why I can write to you. My ber is my blubber, the wild but intelligently civilian blubber of the whale; it is visceral, like all the great documents lettered under any conception of man and Goed and whale and dolphin and Pongidae. And that is all the moral and physical how of it, you see, woman, this is a knife-game. Ber and clain, woman, a gas, xx ben: Kerf ye, says I to the bastards, woman. And in the woods, the barken tree was booled over in a splintering crack, lingering in time. The boren rocks urn earth wore robes around his state, and his State was rhythm frozen, halted mainly. And the woodsman was kerfing the whole migration flat of mudded swamp flat—he had kidnapped refugees from the real government camps where roads ran risks—but the booled over tree was somewhere on the outerlands of the innerlands but deep enough itself inside the

forbidden zone all the same. Insane smell, woman: can you imagine his dwelling, his wooden smoking dūm all crowded with fould and stench and who knows what trinkets of madness, what undererthen floorboards? No, the government special forces would not go in for him. But as I said, he was seen buying tins and then returning on the path. And that was not long ago. Let us say, several months. And that, apparently, was a first. Had he done it to be seen? Because one assumes he had more clandestine ways (thieving ways) of getting tins in the many years that had already gone by—a man can be a hunter but still needs tins for supplemental purposes. Barken tree, booled over, witness? Nar cot. Shlimm it. Ne ne. Not it. Tharn? Unstanced, simply, but something changed. But there was also*** That's not a boolen over tree. That's fallen. That other there is neither fallen nor boolen over. It is standing. Seriatim. The bouldered forest gorge went up at forehead level bending the gaze up from the old leveler parson of olderin rights, hidden towards the sky and the mounting forest around it. Ber and clain;

Yes? Yes. Butt trees have the longest memory, from Gdansk to the clerical. I'm out, I've been out for a long time, I that water animal that came up to the land again, that bleeds on foot the old undergil a grave cross like that mole on ther buttocks, that is my present issue, that is my seed, my longest image, and I scare the inhabitants, such is the image, it is, it is, sorre sorre, got a lorry, drive it homely, love it not, brace for fact, it is the only unly. . . duly ruined for future parson of the people—cwatch. Miller is Maker, sounding his era's features, the granted indocshion, trotaltakesup the splintering bool of the barkenover tree the splintering bark of the boolenover tree crafted halted mainly by the winter and a previous wind. And a stocal causol handles the tasks past but not forgotten. Nar cot. Shirt. Ar the gill the gill the bleeding gill I cut it under the tisch. No you just cut the skin of your foot, husband. So 'twas a wish, swaaaaababy.

October 1995—August 2008

The Fifth Lake

The Fifth Lake

Truth is repulsive. Almost no one can stand it. At the fifth lake it became apparent to me. The boat drifted in on the power of its wake; the people got off and it docked; it may have been that day that determined the matter. Oh: I'm supposed to speak of it. Well I'm not going to until the time is right. It was the second night there. I think the boat had been on too many trips; its motor was always coughing. That night they couldn't get it restarted. So the third night became the fourth night. I could not settle in. I was asking many questions of my brain. But I didn't have a choice. I really had to settle in. Because on the mainland something had broken out. It was on the afternoon that would have turned into the fifth night; well, it did: it turned into the fifth night. There were many nights after that. My fellow travelers were of an array of sorts. I'm not interested in going into any detail about them; I wasn't paying attention to them anyway; and they don't matter in the end. In the end there were only bulbous plates and uncertain stems to be dug up and plied forth. I could not stand that for the first week after the pall of the certainty of the stay set in. Then I saw the sixth lake. Then things changed. First I saw it in my mind because the 'I' in me couldn't believe that my eyes were seeing it; so I kept it in and gave my mind access to it. I got braver though and decided to believe what my sensible eyes were telling me: the sixth lake was visible; it was hidden behind and between the crevices of the iced circles but it was evident to my eyes. I told no one about it. I was developing heavy feelings about the whole matter. This is when I met Maugham. Maugham had a severe stutter at the time. I assumed it to be congenital. Our conversations were long and had great breadth. If I could say nothing else about Maugham I would say that he was greatly knowledgeable. He knew the planetary orbits and the secret ties in the psyche. It was along those lines that our conversations threaded. So I divided my time between conversations with Maugham on the piers of the fifth lake and the solitary contemplation of the sixth lake when I was able to get away. News of the outbreak reached us in fragments. Boats off the coast floated newspapers in plastic bottles towards our shores. Maugham was surprisingly uninterested in all of it. But so was I. I was just entering another decade in my life; my fifth, and it was nothing new to me. Just another instance of a recurring mark. I wasn't aware of anything else in my life; I don't think I ever had been. The sea was very placid at night. The travelers went indoors to sleep. Maugham and I occasionally spoke into the early darkness but he always retired early. This gave me time to go on my walks. At least that's how I referred to them since it could not be helped that people saw me late at night sometimes

returning, among the buildings. Where I went to was a place where I could see the sixth lake. I could spot it from there. The iced circles in the crevices created a light that was fluid but also motionless; it was a bluish-white; it made the sixth lake visible. I never stayed long and returned before all of the travelers were fully in bed; most were asleep, but small groups were still making their way out of their seats and away from their tables on the piers. Maugham never sensed anything. But it was for that reason that I thought he would appreciate it most. I took him one night. He talked the whole way; about various things; Maugham could talk forever if the subject interested him. When we arrived though, he grew still; he patiently listened to my instructions, then he saw it. Maugham started talking again but was brisk now and his stutter was ephemeral and inconsequential. He continued in that exact vein the whole way back; when we said goodnight I watched him walking towards his room in the night; he was swinging his arms back and forth and up and down; I knew he was happy about the lake. The recurring mark that this decade was my fifth seemed wholesome at that moment; more so with the plague or whatever the hell it was that had broken out on the mainland. I felt for the first time in my life that the emptiness of my life had some meaning in itself; I did not give a rat's ass about it, but it struck me; an ego of sorts struck me, something denuded but able to ransom humanity with: and that was surprise.

Truth is not only repulsive; I have discovered that it is also untrue. Maugham was not a good example of this. Maugham had an avid, hyper-sensitive intellect; most of the time he was simply precocious; he was like a gifted child visiting the Exploratorium for the first day, every day; he could not help but to identify things correctly. It was the total exceptional nature of the situation that caused all of this to start up in my mind: plague or whatever the hell on the mainland; our buildings, our piers; our tables and seats and lounge chairs on the piers; the sixth lake and the iced circles cramped in the crevices unconvincing until observed; the inconsequence of the travelers; the dated newspapers floating in to our shores and the unimportance of it; the ephemerality of Maugham's stutter; Maugham's exceptional mind and the affluence of his non-stop mouth. I never used to question the truth of other peoples' statements; I simply didn't care about them; no difference to me either way. Well, now; now I suppose I have a good right to say to people, 'Why should I listen to you?' They've broken my custom: that's how I put it. I don't give a rat's ass in the end; but I can ransom them with it on the fly, according to my will.

I saw Maugham in the morning before he could see me. He was swinging his arms; he was still happy from the night before, from the sixth lake; he had the whole thing in his mind, and he was taking it apart and checking for all combinations and possibilities.

I was saddened when I learned of Maugham's death. I returned to the island in the fifth lake a few years later (the plague, or the outbreak of a media hysteria, had been contained and there was a vaccine for the first, they said, not mentioning the second). The buildings hadn't disappeared. Some of the outdoor furniture still stood as it had stood. Even the plastic bottles laid around up high and dry on the semi-alluvial turf of rocks; they looked like fossil sediments to me, geologically young, unobtrusive—but blighted by the elements since the

time they had floated in. . . but then again not blighted; not blighted: in that environment. I do wonder. I wonder what ineluctability possessed Maugham, he; for he was that: an ineluctable human being. It was as though when he had existed; he had existed in geological time; not having to deal with human time; and I wonder; I wonder if he knew anything about it; did he have; did he have any such self-knowledge in the first place? That's a mystery to me; believe it or not, it haunts me fearfully: For if he was young in that element, if that's really where he was, in that element, I mean (because he was young in mind, that's a certainty, it's axiomatic), but if that's really where he was, then I cannot see him very well, but then again he is distinct in outline; in shadow; and then he becomes: like a shadow; and then; when I remember him, it shivers me, it shivers me up my back. That he may have seen me as a; indicator species classified in the sentient sciences; but if he did, I will never be able to ask: "Who was he?" So I have to ask: "*What* was he?" But I must calm myself, I am not accustomed to having my mind so perturbed, until recently, yes, until I learned of his death.

I'm dilating now; wait; it happens often: I'm in ether. Some one is turning the screw. I hadn't expected this to happen;- no maybe I had-; I wanted to record it; I wanted to tell the story.

I can see the parishioners though (I call them that now; it's a habit); the fellow travelers, whom I had thought so; so. . . they had been irrelevant to me, not because of Maugham; he just made it more conclusive: more aesthetic; I mean, in the secularity of the isolation, on the piers, in the night among the buildings.

I can see him when we arrived at the sighting-point of the sixth lake: he had grown still; he had patiently listened to my instructions, it was the only time I had ever seen him quieted, although he was always quiet of mind. I can see him now, listening to me, as I instruct him: then he saw it: he saw; then starting talking again, but he had become brisk then and his stutter utterly ephemeral and inconsequential. And that's all there is at the end of this. And I'm supposed to live with that? With the truth?

Winter 2008

ALL THE SMALL DEEDS

The Outing

I Told Mama to Come Up

They Are'A Flyin'

Jerry and Ant

'Cept for the roar

The Outing

It would be harder to tell it like this; it appears I have no choice. This wasn't the first time that Joshua's death had made problems for us. There were days when this simply didn't happen; but that was some time ago, even a long time ago. It was in the days when Johnson Summers took his 'friends' on outings every Sunday; Johnson arranged everything, they just needed to show up. Their usual meeting point was exactly eighteen miles down the highway from Tremens Pass. I remember what they told me Johnson said on that particular occasion, a few days before they set off. It was the only time I had actually paid attention to any of his outings: He told everyone that this would be the best outing they've had so far. It's as simple as that. But it's not that simple. Joshua was with them that day. Dan Cranston had told Joshua that he ought to come along, about a week before that. I don't think Joshua thought twice about it. I don't think he thought about it at all. If Dan said it would be fine, then cool. It wasn't like Dan had a calming influence, 'cause he didn't. Dan was just another semi-fucked up kid as far as I was concerned. I didn't see anything unusual about it. But the story is really this. Josh just simply didn't come back. He died up there. He fell to his death. Of course there was a hearing on the case. They said Josh had fallen off Dagger Cliff. It was only several minutes into the outing, they said. Obviously, given Dagger's proximity to the meeting point, which was also the departure point, also obvious. They could step from there right onto the granite. I never talked to the Dan kid after that, that I can tell you. Just another fucked up twenty-eight year old juvenile strung out on acid most of the time. Fuck him. Judge Clifford never made a big thing out of the whole matter. For me it was hard to tell what category of hearing exactly Clifford had assigned it. Fuck him. Johnson lives in a big house now just on the outskirts of town. The mother-fucker even got married. I've got to tell the truth here. I always thought Johnson was a faggot.

I was in San Francisco one time with my Uncle Ant. He killed himself a couple of years ago. It was sheer coincidence that I got to meet two homosexual men while we were there. They were invited to dinner by the lady we were visiting. They were a pair. I personally found the two to be nice people, caring and genuinely interested. There was even something ethical about them that seemed to me very different from anything I had seen before, something that would be alien to heterosexuals. So of course, they were gay. I found 'gay' to be just fine, as I say, even special. But Johnson was pure faggot. I don't like the epithet any more than you do. But I can't find another one that satisfies my disdain for that

bastard. "Killer," maybe. "Rapist," "Fucker of his mother." I'd remove my little finger for you, if that's what you wanted, just to get me out of that hatch. I truly would. Joshua should not have fallen off of that cliff.

I Told Mama to Come Up

I told Mama to come up. There was a pause. "Boy," she said. I asked her why she had caged the elephant. "It done hurt me again." There was a pause.

"Didn't hurt you none Ma. That's just your mind."

"No Boy," she said. "It done hurt me."

I walked up to the bedroom where Ma usually slept. I wanted to see the elephant.

I always thought Ma was joking about her killers: Two blonds. Male. Early twenties. Dad dead on the bed. They had bludgeoned him to death.

It hadn't always been like this, you know. Dad had always been a difficult man but he was capable of understanding certain things even as he ignored the rest. I do believe that he tried to do his best for Ma in his own difficult way. I don't know if he ever loved her. I don't even know if it was she who was the pure reason for him turning away. Anyway, whatever Dad may have had in him before, it was not there anymore, and he had turned away to somewhere else. Either it had been too weak to stay or he had applied a lot of effort to draw it out of himself and keep it at bay.

In those things Dad was good: the darker things; the things that for other men would be difficult. And he probably ended up bludgeoned to death for it.

Then there was Dan. Dan was articulate. Dan got on well with Mama. Mama really liked Dan. He'd nudge her up sometimes with funny stories. Dad laughed at them too. It was like Mama came back for a while each time.

On an afternoon Dad and Dan were drinking beer on the porch. Dad went in to the house for something, probably for some cigarettes. Then Dan moved around to me and told me that Mama's great grandmother had been a witch.

I asked Dad about it later. He said, "Yeah." Then he paused for a minute. Then he said: "Did you know that Dan's got one part Cherokee?"

I said I didn't know about that. Then he turned his head away from me and drank his beer.

It doesn't matter to me now. There's an elephant in every room. I think that's what Dan wanted to tell me.

They Are' A Flyin'

I went out with my Uncle Ant on a walk one day. He said, "Boy." I said, "Yeah Ant." He said, "Look yonder." He pointed. There was a flock of geese. "Nice, Ant. Nice, Ant." "Aint it," he said. "It sure is," I said; emotional intensity, coming out of me. "You think so?" asked Ant. "I said I did," I replied. "You did do that," he responded. "Yeah I did Ant. That's right." Again, emotional intensity coming out of me. "Deed," he said. "Whatcha see over there?" he asked. He had already pointed where I should look. "Nothin'," I said. "Nothin'?" he asked. "I said *nothin'*" I told him. I was waiting for the usual, but I was angry. It came out of me. "Nothin'" he said. "That's right. That's what I said." "That's what you said before," was his retort. "I said it again, then." "Clear," he said. "No argument with that," he said. "What's your problem, Ant?" "I gotta a problem boy?" "You do," I said. "You're repeating yourself again," was his retort. "No shit, Ant." "Clear," he said. "What do you want, Ant?" I said. "Nothin'. *Nothin'*" he said. "I don't want nothin' from you, boy," he said. I was in no mood now. "Look yonder Ant," I said. "Looking yonder," he said as he peered in the direction I had indicated. "You see them geese?" I asked. "See 'em," he affirmed. "They are'a flyin'," I said. "Indeed they are, boy."

Jerry and Ant

"Hey' Ant."

"Hey' A."

"Where's your nuph?"

"Don't know. He aint here."

"Well you're his Unc. He lives here."

"I don't where he is and I don't know where he goes and Jerry you got weird words: Unc, Nuph. What's the matter with you? What's the matter with you anyway?"

"I like 'em Ant. Anything the matter with that?"

"Yeah: When other people gotta listen to 'em."

"No one ever said not'in' to me 'bout it."

"That's 'cause they don't wanna hurt yer feelin's. You might as well say Bukakak when you say good morin' to Mrs. Summers."

"You're a mean man sometimes Ant."

"No, I hurt yer feelin's Jerry, that's all. Just tellin' you like it is."

Ant pauses, thinking, and then is serious in tone, mysteriously solemn, a surface of five words given only by a cruel dispensation of unutterable properties:

"Cause I'm yer friend Jerry."

"Well thank you so much for that. I'm gonna go now. Still wonderin' where

your nuph is."

"You get on out of here Jerry. Come back when you got normal words and reasonable questions."

Someone guffawed and then spat six times, it sounded like it came from the barn: 'Nigga cum white Jerry Brown. Mrs. Summers. He wants to start a school of thought. He wants a million followers. He wants to finish it before he dies. But it will be too late. Because with his death will come his demise. That's what happens when yaw fake it.'

I think Ant killed Jerry. I don't know. Clifford didn't do this case.

Same DA, different judge.

What the fuck. One day off two years to the day of Joshua's fall. But that's only forensics; Josh's body was a definite mark in clocked time. No one clocked Jerry's. Body found, time of death estimated; not in hours, in days. So either it happened the same day or it didn't, and that, folks, is what's so cynical about tautologies in forensics.

Now, why Nigga Cum? Well, why the fuck Homo Cum? I see that I need to spend some time resting. Still, why Homo Cum? Cum Laude? No, Cum Johnson Summers. That's right, I circumnavigated, to this: Johnson Summers killed Jerry. He had the two blond kids knifed to death in prison. Mother-fuck got away with it all. I think I'll kill Johnson now. I think it's about time. And how do I know, when the DA and the Judge and Jury didn't? You don't want to know. *Because of Ant! That's the only reason! It was the only way!*

'Cept for the roar

'Cept for the roar of my crucified Uncle Ant arms flailing crushing the whore until she died.

"The horror. The horror of the whole Tent. The Tent of Mankind," my Uncle Ant said.

"Ant, I want you to stop that."

"That's good boy. It's good."

"I mean it."

"So mean it."

"I've tried, Ant."

"So you've tried."

Appalachian I did once in my life *many times* with my grandfather. I tackled the land. I hooked the trout. But the anxious nose for trouble I had suited me just fine, and just as well it did; or not, perhaps. I don't know. And I don't care.

And it was in that way that I departed so often; a wild cat distressed by

the drunk and gunful men raping the forest and urinating beer and stringing up crude hammocks for the carcasses of their kill, which were mainly gutted deer.

That was her mind though fields tilled by weak men; she could be bread winner, callous as our thoughts are—never ending. She was right in that. It was an achievement.

Appalachian I did many times in my wife *many times* with that whore. She wasn't the whore though; not her, not my wife. The whore was another. Wet from the womb then man's smile in the dirt. 'Cept for the roar of my crucified Uncle Ant—arms flailing crushing the whore until she died. No, *No*: The controlled mayhems took me out of the lines and into the heart of Agamemnon. You do not do that with anybody unless you want to lose your gut and see it spun by spiders. Agamemnon's floor was certainly littered. There is no way Out. You Cannot Go Away from that After Doing That. Why is this not clear to people? *No*, you cannot Speak. And where do you think you would get the rights? There's no cosmic censor for you. You're doned'in. I am going to be a bit vicious: Look, this is what it's going to do to you: It is—as—a pocket watch broken up by scissors in outer space. You look scared. You can't feign a righteous display of surprise. Well no, you wouldn't. *O Ant!*

William McKenna

William McKenna

One

"It's a drought year and everything seems fine. It shouldn't be that way, should it? I cussed off William the other day and brought his wife down— to the creek. What a fine time. She kicks, I can tell you. I've never had such good cunt as I've had with that woman.

"What a fine time. The sun *is* shining today. I *am* sterling today. William's father is in the hospital—said it's his heart again, new day again. Fundamental. I stayed up with Ma last night. She knitted. I held the cat and watched the television. Fundamental.

"Next day, down at the creek William's wife lay naked for me, again; for me alone, again. 'Cept the critters, 'course. Now that's an ailment that my father never did tell me about. Jesus knows I cannot blame him for it.

"My brother Dave came home last week and he and William lit the town up—'bit. William's wife. Lord. Some say it takes a man to move a mountain but I bet William's losses are not so great."

I wrote that down ten years ago in my journal. These are some of the common furies of these fields and this land— the fields, the land, again. We had thought that the furies had disappeared in this land because of the flatness of it. It is partly true and that makes it worse, and most of us don't even understand why or that there is this particular what to ask a why of. These fields and prairies that are this land here are steeped in history and therefore we are also. It is unfortunate because history destroys everything and it is unnatural, history does not belong. It is a protestant dictum that we should have it that way. But the history has already happened here so we can no longer influence it or stop it. Most of us here, of course, don't even think about this, not even up until we die. These are not meager things, they are liable to furious remembrance so they are able to hunt, be they ghosts or other fraught things or what they may be.

I was never hired for this covenant with record keeping. It's not so much a yoke on me. I just know what to tell. Well that is not true. I do know what to tell that is true. But that history being knowing what to tell is a load on me and it is on William and it is on his wife. And on Dave. I love Dave but he drifted a long time ago and I don't know him anymore. That is not a trifling thing to say of a brother, and it is not a trifling thing in point of fact, but so it is.

When he was young Dave read and read, he was the family bookworm. Then

the history took form in his mind, that of which he read, and he opted to that world, he let it do its unstoppable burial work in him. That history learned him. It learned him too hard. I know it did. I know what he was reading and I know who he was visiting nights and other times and it was not that his visited were bad because they weren't. I know. I know the whole story, by what sum has it been given to me to become the historian? I cannot go further now than to get into the deep earth of that which learned him too hard which is now supposed to allow comfort for me. That which after its destroying I've got to embrace to keep it away from the furious men of the day that still deny it.

It is maybe a trifle to some but it is a universal good thing when a man has a horse— for I will ride, book in mind, William in tail, Dave. . . Dave, I do not know where Dave will be when I ride. I hope he will be with William's wife down at the creek because she is a compassionate and soulful woman. And William is not a hurttable man.

I can no longer tell these words. I am tired. I lay me down to God's issuance and mercy that I do not repeat or cause the man-and-woman-belittling furies that we name history but which is really a terrible march. I finish—for the time apparently.

Two

Fallon was supposed to come around one day soon. He didn't come and that was not because he had not wanted to if he had wanted to.

Immediately, William wouldn't talk about Fallon's not-coming. William's wife Jennifer could tell stories of ferns and faeries and red squirrels and even forest boars and their young's but she could not comfort William the Unhurttable who was manly hurt if ever a man was manly hurt. Dave didn't take the bait and he did not answer letters. Lord knows Jennifer wrote enough of them to him. Fallon was gone. William was out of his God-stricken mind. Dave had other matters and did not yoke. As he never in his God-damned life had.

Those days as in all the other hard days that passed through my life I rode and did not stop until the horse knew when I could not. Horses sense a man's infirmities. I did keep the horse fed and watered though as we traversed the land. That I could do and it was that that was my job and my stewardship during those days during those rides 'till the horse knew when I could not. Which saved me each time.

When riding I had to feed off the sound of the aspen getting whirled and chopped by the wind. I had fed from it. I had yes I had. And there would be a time in my life when I could use it even if it had by then already done the drama of taking me until and to my last hour. One should not be surprised by this. 'Cept that I've known many people and you cannot tell about them always I have learned, for many are vehement. William's wife could relate all of this better than I, albeit I may hazard as any man, red squirrel or blue jay or aspen or not. Every man is equal in the eyes of God so why should he not be in the eyes of mine?

That for Fallon was a piece of granite for that equality to me— yon Jumbo, that was it. And now I remember. These arbiters of the human law always opt for a throne with a door just one step down from where they go to an Anteroom which stinks of prison sentences and bourbon deals that divide the heart. I am entitled to this reasoning yes I am. And I do feel the burden of some stewardship. I am an adult human being and that is about as serious and important as anything can be, although there are other serious and important things. Better to leave these things though.

These things count here and only here, but our 'here' is a sizeable place to be. It's meaningful and it's dreadful. It may seem puerile or insensate to bring these kinds of things up.

Yes I know. But I am forty and it may be that this is not for young men and women, I cannot tell the whole way of the things in front of me. I never could. Not since Fallon didn't come around and William went God-stricken mad as a hatter in the face of his mother and his wife and his little children. I look after them now. Yes, they have names. Why shouldn't they?

I do not rest in the semi-indifferent knowledge of Arabian sands. In me when peering for the blissful and callous indifference that some other men have. No it is just short of God I would say, forgive me for that—if it bears forgiving. I really did try.

Winter 2008

War

Author's Note:

I almost didn't publish
this. It pains me too much.

One WAR

The war had been horrible since the horses and the rain began to fall. The war had always been horrible. That year it was even worse. That was the year when Colonel Achers came walking into our lives. That was the year of the trials when you could be taken from under your barren sheets. Whenever someone was taken it was over: no one ever saw that person anymore. When we weren't fighting we were not safe. We all tried to stay fighting as long as we could. It was safer. We were all happy when we could be in the pubs. One of us usually sat for Jason's baby. What couldn't be forgotten was the war, of course, but we were able to be happy—for a time.

I will always remember—several years before the trials and just before the war came into our lives—returning from the factory in the evening in the snow. We had a baby that winter and we had unwisely moved to this God-forsaken place. When I went into the woods the director's work-siren would sometimes permeate the woods from not more than five kilometers way. That was when I was able to feel the earth. I remember walking out one night onto the edge of the forest, which had no end, but was still bounded by roads and hills, tilled and untilled earth and lakes: I looked up into the darkening sky and I was not happy inside. I had not forgotten the war that was fighting against us, but at the time I thought it was only an economic war.

Then came the real war. It had already been happening for several years in fact. We were just not part of it, and never had any idea we would or should be. When I say we I speak of my friends, my wife, and I. One day a man tapped me on the shoulder and asked me to come with him. I was taken to a dark room where they asked me questions about my wife, my parents, my friends, my present and past employers, my education, my political views and associations. Apparently I passed the test, since they drafted me. The next morning I was in an armored vehicle with others like me, young and intelligent looking but with uncertainty written all over their faces, going to a place where we could learn to use weapons—guns, of various sorts. I reckoned that if we had stayed in the country, and not moved to the place where I was offered the job of warehouse manager for the automatic lines of the factory, that forsaken place, we could have gone unnoticed. I still think so, and my regret is more than regret: it is fate.

At the factory I had not been very happy. I was happy when coffee breaks came and I could look out into the falling snow, past the dusty and cardboard lined windows of our large centralized cubicle. My job consisted mainly in checking

that the picking lists matched what the pickers actually took from the warehouse. I had to make physical inventories also. Perhaps that's why — after being drafted and two weeks into our weapons training — I was put in charge of our stores of ammunitions. That gave me a certain standing, since I was still so fresh. Only the top knew of my past employment, so among the rest it 'meant something.' I still don't know whether this was a stroke of good fortune or not.

Now on to the pigs and the horses and the rain. We were showered, and we camped. We camped and fired. We raided. We fouled, raped, shot at range, executed. Achters was behind it all. We were only following orders. My wife's letters were confiscated, I know this even though I have not seen her for several years. I can only express the rapacity of our wake with the kind of language which does not exist in society, as for example: 'Mrn charn fark could marren yor belof. Cities karken wirth dod charen ashen.' Nothing was ever finished. But we brought an end to so many viable stuffs. It was the time of the pigs and the horses and the rain. The children that were born were born next to the thunder of it. Some of us tried to save them, since their parents were as good as dead. If we were caught we were dead. And some of us were. I was nearly caught one night carrying a child through the woods to some friendly encampments which were strictly forbidden to us and which we spent our time trying to destroy. I met up with a man carrying a Swiss Cross that night and he was not a man of peace, he was not a good man. He shot at me and the child and swore that he knew my face. Either he met a bad fate or he did not really recognize my face, since I have never been questioned.

The years passed. We repeated ourselves. Achters was never far from sight and always close to our fate. I think you understand what I mean. His face was everywhere, even in the bark of the trees. Each year repeated itself. Then Achters disappeared. The war ended. We dropped our weapons. But we had left walls everywhere and the friendly encampments were all gone. I took up the lead of several men to try to reorient ourselves and find our way home. By then none of my original friends were left. They were either dead or dispersed, like us. But we had to bond to survive. These years repeated themselves on end and now it is several years later and I am searching for my wife and child who must be nearly eight years old now. I know they are alive somewhere and I will not stop until I find them. This is the end of my story, since I have to continue my life.

Two REVERSION

The Colonel walked along the edges of the graves. He was thinking of reverting to the habit of writing letters on paper. It wasn't the bodies he was thinking of. It was his handwriting. He saw people stooping when he came near. A bomb exploded in mid air and knocked him to the ground. He felt the heavy concussion of the fall. He stood up and brushed himself down. He felt for a piece of paper

in his pants pocket and a pencil in his shirt pocket. He remembered he had put both in a hidden outer section of his boot. He reached down and unbound it. He went over to a rock to write. It was a letter to no one. He wrote: "Let me tell everyone. I tasted that weapon. It tasted like led." He felt enthralled. He took a look at the sky and inhaled. It wasn't his last breath.

O'Brien rode over on a horse. Achters was annoyed. Achters was annoyed. He hated O'Brien. Achters had enough self-consciousness to know that he himself was a fox, but he hated and feared O'Brien, whom he knew to be a smiling snake. Everyone was collectively familiar with O'Brien's smile.

O'Brien did not even greet him. He just rode past. Achters wanted to take out one of his poison darts from another of his countless concealed pockets and blow it into O'Brien's back with the newer and more powerful blowing-apparatus he had just recently acquired. He restrained himself, since he wanted to keep his life. He took out a knife and smelled it instead. "It smells like led," he hissed to himself: "Led to carve up shit. O'Brien-shit." O'Brien was a civilian but was famous for his military knowledge and his mastery of its affairs. O'Brien believed Achters to be a mongrel, and laughed about it at private parties—private parties which Achters was not invited to. The news of these parties inevitably reached him. O'Brien had masterminded the body's contingency plans for nuclear holocaust. Most agreed that it was a work of genius.

Three TRIALS

It was the time of the trials. The pigs were rampant, the drafts had returned from the forests and the hills; the fish in the lakes had been bombed to starve the friendly encampments; their spawning areas in the streams had been officially contaminated. The ethnics were gone.

The woman stood at the two-burner stove in the yellow cubicle of the apartment. It was not an apartment, it was a hole and it was a hold. The man walked in. The woman wasn't forbidden anything. Her fate was sealed. He swore, and the woman swung her hand over his mouth before he could say more. She said he could eat. The man didn't resist. He sat down to the potatoes and ate. Society was dead. They both knew it and had known it. In the next apartment, the adjacent dirty holding place for the next couple, they could hear the orders of the police. The orders were meant for them also, the pig orders of the overfed and bloody Achters lot; they could continue to eat while their neighbors could not, for the moment. The neighbors had to be taken. The war was over and the trials had begun. They knew their fate. The man tried to resist sometimes but the woman always put his mind right. The man spat out a small rock that had been placed invisibly in one of the potatoes, and they both knew what the other was thinking. He said, "I don't care." It was one of the ways the authorities frustrated people. But the man and the woman didn't care. She didn't even put out her hand to

cover his words, which she knew were usually like weeds and which she would have appreciated more like they were flowers or nice things just several years ago. That's how much things had changed and not changed. He still remembered the horses and the rain, the wild boars, the rapine and the executions. He had been under orders. When their door was knocked down several weeks later they were ready to go.

Four BOTCH

The whole lot of things had been botched. There were wads of yellow spit in the office buildings and the hospitals. Doctors and men in suits grasped each others hands and felt the need. Meanwhile the tanks chored in more remote areas of the great bloc, which included regions of country and old heartland where settlers had knitted and ate and built. No one remembered the sun drenched hills in the old rain and the Quaker mounds since the rain and smog pellets had been introduced. Handcuffing was an act with a positive reference because of its pain and the nullification of its meaning. A nurse stooped and a doctor walked by in a white robe. He was going to meet with the trial cases. They were kept in a separate ward. It had actually become the only ward. "The trial cases are dead men," he thought. The reason the nurse stooped was because she knew what he was going to think. He knew that was why she stooped but did not need to think about it. All the nurses did that. It was a habitual pattern which had developed into an institution of his presence in the hospital corridors. He didn't even care. The nurses didn't even know why and they were only concerned with the habit and not the man. It was insane.

That day was a rare day. The blue clouds rippled the sky and the potato famine was hailed for the dumping of all of the beef in the ocean. There was the conditioned / automatic swelling of stomachs, and the snow was just around the corner of the next month. The woman in the kitchen cooking potatoes over a two-burner stove and the man cursing and then sitting down to her potatoes were dead for a century by this time. No sign had been left of their existence and so no one knew about them or their kind. The litany was insanity and the manifold statement, which always appeared in the form of an unnaturally induced natural phenomenon.

It was a rare day for the doctor. He was going to visit "dead men." He kept clay imprints of all of their faces. Moisture files preserved them for him. He was interested in the way their hands moved.

Five ILLOCUTIONS

The primary reason for not doing anything was seen to stem from circumstantial psychosis. The authorities coined it with the diagnostic assistance of the doctors. They were certain that memory was the only reality. They derived this fact from the body of English and Western literature, which was officially non-existent. They wished to subvert this reality and to benefit from the consequences. Achieving this subversion in a thirty year period of frenetic but controlled endeavor they had created a psychosis in the cases and the non-cases, i.e. in the population, that had a theoretically infinite set of influencing factors that could occur in routine or non-routine living. The cases especially showed remarkable depths of illocutionary potential when they broke through the habitualized boundaries of circumstantial psychosis. This was usually induced by excessive length of confinement. The authorities were able to compare their illocutions to the officially non-existent body of English and Western literature. The illocutions from the cases were very similar to the illocutions of the Old World English of Geoffrey Chaucer. There existed an officially non-existent list of one to one comparisons between illocutions emitted by cases and sentences found in any of the works of this man Chaucer.

One doctor found a case in the Russian writer N. Gogol. Gogol was interesting for a variety of reasons. The authorities and the doctors silently revered his *Dead Souls*. When it was not discussed it was thought about: The nurses stooped when the men in white robes passed through the corridors with their aura of institutional presence. This had also been determined by now and was being monitored. It was not yet ready for control. Gogol had written that one should beware of memory because it is an open wound. The doctor thought that in Gogol's assumption, as it came to be known, he had found the nature of the boundaries set by circumstantial psychoses which the cases were breaking through after prolonged confinement. The non-cases were monitored.

Six LIVING MOTION

The habit of nurses stooping was something essentially to be deplored. But it was loved with indifference and that ephemeral attention which was the common denominator of everyday consciousness. Indifference and attention were the same things. The occurrence of indifference in the population was dependent on a certain

quantity of ephemeral attention. Ephemeral attention was dependent on a certain quantity of indifference. The stooping habit itself was a pivotal mosaic of human neurosis and the authorities wished to preserve it, while the doctors wanted to preserve it. They could not do this by filing it since it needed to be a living motion, since it was a living motion. The nurses were too useful to be turned into cases. The doctors in any case had gotten used to the fact that the authorities had officially established their physical aura on hospital grounds as institutional. One doctor compared this to the 19th and 20th centuries' parliamentary habits, and the habits of the members of parliamentary bodies granted by the public. (In the cognition laboratories one of the original theses had been that it should serve as just one singleton of an all-encompassing set of planned corrective reactions against the destruction of institutional viabilities done by the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, yet with a preservational component built-in to it.) It was essential for him to take this view because of the nature of his education. Each book he had read was inscribed by the authorities on the first page with the dogma: "Every book you have read is a rational node of contrivance in your brain. This is our educational definition of hope." When the doctor was a student he had had a forbidden thought. He thought this dogma was part of an indirect plot to eliminate certain classes of thought. After thinking it through more clearly he saw that this was not right. The invisible movement of his lips and the stirrings of his larynx which accompanied all thought were being watched. He determined that some things were simply very useful and it was the great accomplishment of the authorities to have established this.

By now almost all of the doctors felt obliged to kiss their wives with chewed bread in their mouths. It was being monitored. It was not yet ready for control. The diagnostic authorities were preparing a document that scientifically compared this phenomenon to the habits of birds and other animals, which fed their young, or their sick from their mouths. The authorities were satisfied that all new human behaviors developed spontaneously. This was their precondition. No one dare suggest that this be put down in a capsule of text. What was put down in capsules of text was memorialized. This was usually accomplished in bronze plaques or stamps. But the cases were not eternal sources of text because they were mortal. They were dying off. The non-cases were becoming the focus of attention. When the diagnostic authorities began to exhibit the same behaviors as the doctors, who were also non-cases, the authorities had reason for concern. One authority hung himself.

Seven GRACK BLAY

Reinvigoration of the lamb. Circumstantial psychosis generated historically in individual cases, by definition and fact. Richard III, 1917, history and comeuppance in literary document.

The realpolitik of the inner mind, Grack blay, old tome of uncertain origin, marn thickle chick faqr marn chicksure cainfaidaince, thickened the footprints in the snar.rd1011 Thart yar war a cold yar. Thart hegelian answer feuded worth your mammal cammin hovno. Epith et hum en aid nogernooted the swiss aid in the forest, where thart mercedes benz ruled a sapce whor refugesmen either/ or other were kept. I did see it. Did. That war so long ago, in old century. Simpe gun foar Achers, more compelex matter foar O'Brien. Gunned & cunned in the stomach whoar ,gain koar draught. Ahyar. Somple compe. Whoar gain whoar sane w/in their parlence, such beef in ocean sinking. Ieyer war oll & nezdrav till hafenfoot cod gill the bread also w/thart botched weight. Comple sompe.

Complaint: Hedda gabled her life when she shot out. That war in in 1898. Yar plain feud in the coming ,viron was criml wit. Neme me, bastards. Criml wit, Truman.

Commercial harem in the tree is badly acted by hume en. Sard mard trock curded. Yapangala. Aid chrost hume en swear marc one forest fenced-in area habited bore refugees. Unhairc schadenfraud on people of a cotisensmrt. Chilled the child's soup and broke his mother's heart in the airwar on the groundwar.

Racemoot soll cartroom & field. Theayar horses hoofprints thard forest in soil or topsnow. Thart may be beauty if heartintents. Thart may be holll if hartintents. Such minford drinking. Cew O'Brien mainfred drinks. Sollen Sollen Sollen ,till hafenfoot & something in yer nuture will not acknowledge. Pity arf.

And when it all came down to the end of things, illforce and ingSOC certerled memory, and the directing force of all programmes. Cew, the young couple with rock insertion in potato, gone, gool gool in the dearth of nonextent past, ale they existed, gerd's eyes will know, have, are: Epi-hum-en-aid-thesis, cracked in two.

Truman yer cerf. What farcking down sitting notion dird ye enterntain when ye wrot the bible for siew seulf on the euphrates, yer nogerned era in a pcarb nit in yer shotin brain. Farck you. Gert kein empathy fur yer kritin chit. Hoc. Cide. Plan it for you, arken yer soul. Criiiiinge thaaaaaat limb. Ill kert ye. Arnd if ye recruit Ill mort ye.

Sick mother fucker gan han thef woman, thef child, thef man, thef marn, thef urs, cergigate vinron destruction, kd. Thart clim leman, arnd thart clime knight, arnd those companion falcons, and the lake drag to minion that good officer that knight on leman, a iller killer instincta in yer noigerned era pcarb drit bron stole his carcas awor, after the drag, after the work of the leman, the companion falcons, and the furty death of thaart thef woman leman urnd her unbern bab that the bothof em wrote him to the lake side on the clime rock.

Farck you. And if you recruit Illl mort ye. Criiiiinge thaaaaaat limb, eram goin to cripple yer blotted hands. Thar, yer cant move em now. Sitt still. Clerse yer eyes. Yer weere born a babe like the leman furty death that was your thefy, bert we have to let ye sitt still. Clerse yer eyes, sink back into that armchair. Rest. It is me, marn hand that strokes yere broken forehead, that sits on satans stills, because of what I have wrote. Rest. It is me. It is me. It is meeehhhh! 2001. That's a year, a consequence. It is me, yer bastard, yer friend, yer-vdsrxnery-veryself as am I, evil and ovallar as ye're. Yer noigerned era in a pcarb nit in dar shotin bron twer mon allso. Arm locke you.

But I can write, document, fulminate, give refuge. But ye are malum in se five republican judges for a bushwhacking fascist crimily ars Bundy, thart

prepositionally starved law student. Bundy had no help from his Daddy, he was simply clever.

I have written till my head has fallen off. But now I am going to write for real. The realpolitik of your very thought. O'Brien is direct from Orwell's O'Brien. Achers is direct from Karadzic. Criinge, flaw, fly, try, I believe you are on the run. Francois Bizot, scholar Khmer, on reinvention as the focus of every pogrom, and that includes your bastardized office environment for your parbed bronwitted season of hate.

Uncle harmon was a sect untomself like every hue men. Marn Nana knew it. Boddied boy in 1918 military influenza ward he cerd a werd for you. 'Arm welsh watchert fer thhret ferret Churchill.' Dert nerse wrotit in her dery. Boy in ward to nerse: 'Never will there be Mammy more.' Wrote in her dery, she did, the good nerse. Strooked the boy's feverish forehead as his last breath rattled for his Nanna Mammy as he flew away and the gentle sperm whale took the gerd boy to paradise.

Modamfuckosis, o nerse, chill me. Helter-skelter of the crowd in his veins, stress shocks of all and sundry manifestation and type, sanitary hell in the ttronche and merdy frock, just how many of his schoolmates had gone with himl. The virus did not mutate, and such was the message from the dying boy who understood the disturbances. The doctor walked in. They took tissue samples from his lungs even before there was time for a proper autopsy.

Eram gonna conjure a behavioral streak that will blitz you. Going to wreck the canon. Unearth it. Gravedigger. Sadist. Virus carrier. Ttronch himl. Criml wit, bron shot. Bush, Stimson, Reagan, Cheney, Truman, Foster Dulles, Nixon, Rumsfeld, Kissinger, Perle, Wolfowitz, allye, weare gonna geat'a. Criinge, flaw, fly, try, you are on the run, eram gonna tronch ye wrotin cutuoip fucked muckedup sadistic boybrain. Shard ye have a chronology? Har it-is, fminal monster. Ar ser to gaud the white man is the worst. Eram gone raucus your paucus, what depresses the soud? The Critch, the Critch! Mark you own buines Sowell! Piahd!!! Looooohhhhhhhhhha, what a bithc! Charles! Crocidate! Recodivkar! Chocawalla, baaaaaybeeeee. Love yae. 1sec/LLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLL, arm thot. Trill me, erarm ready for the betty, uncle joe.

O chillme, nerse. Rock me, suck me, o chillme, nerse. Fuck me. Fuck me. Night had become a wild horse. Horse had gone night. What more? Doesn't insanity finish there? 'Thar man, eram ok.' Couple, potatoes in mouth, neighbors being taken. Bloody lot. Sar? Aha. Shod do it. Shard da it? Soud. Marn soud. Akah, eram alrite. Chalk it up. Cha*** okay, go on now. Geteyup.

Eight ROSES

"There is no one who knows how it is," the doctor told me that directly. "My wife, even she doesn't know," and why the doctor brought his wife into it I don't know. But apparently it is relevant to him even if it is not to me and maybe that is

the important thing for him at least and then it also makes it if not relevant to me at least sensible to me. I trust the doctor he is one of the few people I trust. Not because he is a doctor although if he were not he would not know what he knows and I am sure we would not be associated in conversation or in any other way, for it seems the probabilities are low taking away that element of the knowledge of doctorhood. Doctorhood is a rather strange notion but it applies when I think about this doctor and what kind of person he would be if he weren't a doctor. "Roses, they heal my patients, medicine is secondary, and then what is medicine, and if not roses well anything like them for example art." The doctor says such strange things sometimes and it is certain and a fact that I don't prompt him to do it. He just talks to me. He's a bit of what I would have called a libertine in these matters if I had lived in one of the older centuries. But that combination is one of the reasons why I trust him. "I'm treating a young couple for disease of the relationship, but not for disease of the marriage I tell them, and that didn't help although I had hoped it would. Maybe I should have switched the terms." I agree with the doctor that he should have switched the terms. I tell him so. He is not sure though, "There are some problems with that," he was just speculating about the switching of the terms. "Doves, now that would be good, they're like roses." I agree with him and I tell him so. This is some doctor. "How about pebbles" I suggest to him, "a whole big glass bowl of them." The doctor doesn't always respond, and that's his right because I understand the considerations he has to take to do the right thing because that's what a doctor is supposed to do, do the right thing. I tell him so and he doesn't respond but he does offer me a paper cup of water from the huge blue thing next to his chair. You see why I like this doctor? He's just right up front with you and it all works out.

Nine LEAVES

The doctor picked up the wet leaves out of the muddied water. He had the idea of a mosaic of neurosis and art in his mind, and there mingled the beauty of older centuries. The day was very cold. He put the leaves to his nose and tried to detect scents. He was treating a young couple who believed that in a past life they had lived in a point in time in the future that was future to the doctor's present life also. They had the same nightmares. The themes and the characters of the dreams concerned the doctor. It was the couple who had been taken by the overfed and bloody Achers lot while in their apartment hold, twenty-five years after the doctor's sad death, the ones who had been forced to diet almost exclusively on tampered-with potatoes like so many others at the time. The doctor of course did not know this but as he smelled the wet cold autumn leaves, right up to his face and the wetness was there mingled with his features, he thought that reincarnation was detectable only through the sensations of an artistic nature. Was it for that reason, he enquired of himself, that he had tried

to use roses, thought about doves, and imparted a verbal therapy of diagnosis of disease of the relationship and not of the marriage. . . to balance the poor and lovely creatures? For a moment he felt that he was not well, and mimed, "I am insane because I know."

Ten CHARMING

The sewer in his mind was a stain on the world, as an odorous and beautiful rose burning in hell for no reason. He would tread and this time he would kill-off the pigs. The communism of thought had ruined him. That of course was the irony. It was to that already accomplished end that he dictated his present actions. The communism of thought and behavior, and for such there would be an elimination functor so embedded in his psyche that God could not comprehend it in his coldest calculation. This time the sewer would run true. He had no worries for the consequences. It was already a manifest term that needed only to be completed and it would be because it was completing itself over him and through him and it was an it alien and separated off from him. Thus they would not be able to call him a coward when the term termed itself finally all up and over all the earth to be beheld. And she was such a passion for him, as passionate as the manifest rose and it was thus that he would term the term for all sparse pity and scarcity in all of the most tragic and saddest schocksonnets nor war's quick fire shall burn the living record of your memory and then fall not to the hands of man but to the hands of all that is to be beheld. Because it was man himself and not woman who was pathologically crooked in the bron and mond since the beginning of hume en time. And so it was ordained, and so he accepted. His first acts thereafter were vodka and Russian roulette. The third time was a charm. His sperm covered the world. It had been passion. It had been Stendhal. Henry Brulard, that great imaginative wretch. Bullet: caliber .22. That poor, poor wretched good Doctor. Night had become a wild horse. Horse had gone night. What more? O chillme, nerse. Rock me, suck me, o chillme, nerse. Fuck me. Fuck me. Night had become a wild horse. Horse had gone night. What more? Doesn't insanity finish there? "Thar man, eram ok." Couple, potatoes in mouth, neighbors being taken. Bloody lot. Sar? Aha. Shod do it. Shard da it? Soud. Marn soud. Akah, eram alrite. Chalk it up. Cha**** okay, go on now. Getieyup. Get ye up, Man! He tried, the good Doctor fought. The wild horse was too strong, the roses, the leaves, were. . . but when the couple whom the Doctor had been treating for disease of the relationship and not of the marriage heard about the good Doctor's tragic death—the author is hard-put: They committed double suicide. They strew themselves in roses in their apartment and then died together of nearly equal doses.

Eleven
HARD-LYESOM

Ye think that's the end of the story? No. The doctrop had been in the pub earlier in the day. The darkling of the pubstole on which hismug stodd close to the ranks of the old peers of the old courts of the old knights of the oold winking king at hils table of knights wherein the covenant toi mark the toem and the sword: To sword'away the swordfucking hand that made the syncategorematic genocidal gene. Doctrop, the old fump, his was author, the, nbut. Hard-put? Hard-lyesom. Thus the doctrop sat, the pimp and his halfstarved Mary at the next table in the corner, Mary eating, pecking, pimp pimping into Mary's face and food with the rot of talk. Doctropic sideglances at pimp and Mary, tropes of salibial absorbpative pepperedrumpestak fluids and grinds and gusts of beer in doctrop's mouth!

Doctrop, Doctrop,
Where Did Your Dog Rot?
In Maine Kettle Kettle Kettle
Ring Run Ring Run.

Poor babyface doctrop. We all took him so seriously. Hard put? Hard-lyesom. The greatest hitter of all time! We kindly ask you to stop maligning the greatest sport of all!

Doctrop, Doctrop,
Where Did Your Dog Rot?
In Maine Widow Widow Widow
Hillside Fen Cess.

Babe! Even the wife didn't know! What was her name again?
Babe—I'm guilty!
Magistrate—Condomite!

Doctrop, Doctrop,
Where Did Your Dog Rot?
In Maine Pussy Willow Willow
Street Side Menses.

Twelve MANHEATED

In this manheated place, where I have cut the shrubs and circled them up as shores and breakwaters against the sun across the forest helter-skelter, the sweat burns from my wounds, burns with a brightness because the hole beneath the shrubs is a dark sandstone forest hillock cave. I am manheated, woman unbound to, sacked in my own scrotum, pleased by the peeling and crippled skin of the sack, the pink cloth of unsheathe. Manfuck enters and I tell him to leave. He does so. I call on my gnome to descend from paradise and leaven my hell. (I am mortal here. Each step is a bomb going off.) My gnome doesn't come but at least I am an artful wisher. An arcane wisher for the grammatical witch hunt of dissenters to fall into my wrongheaded saidings cramped up like deer feed in a forest trough and take that Maßfuck and go find your own forest I am the guardian of the massive masthead mastheap horses here that pull the loggingloads. Fenced in lugarmoot call me a memoryphile that where the bark peeled to cryptic roughhewn silence, a staid in that place cod lift you gerdenintrees handholding in three friends of old. And so 'tit's.' Cranes. Livered buttered trees. Cromming across the rainfield. And eeram the songhand. Wart rain. This forest doesn't missis. Diggertrop prorot-wisher sails with the wioth the fisher. In darrel himmel garrison the trock in the hand writing the craick beneath the candle and blowing out the intruder in the black cape writing feck him ffeck him off to the devil, and the sheets denuded with the literal stuff off the cfoff and the cunt. Denuded well and lit all good galling in the leggy trough: Maßfuck fecking Mary: Doctrop read the craic and tried to kill Maßfuck, at which Mary fed up with Doctrop. Blistering Mary moric say get out to Doctrop, poor babyface hurtup in his little feelingsset. Tries to seduce Mary with centuries of condensed virtue craic the next day, and crops a singleton in Mary's kettle oven. Poor Babyface Doctrop! Stop maligning the greatest sport of all! How is that Maßfuck left her unleavened with that devil's bag and rod of his and you littled her big and warped her in premature ejaculation?

Doctrop: I plead guilty to depth!

Maßfuck: I have a clean conscience. Doctrop's a rotter and menace to society.

Mary: Save my child! Maßfuck's the father!

DNA Tester: Tests declare otherwise. Doctrop is the father!

Maßfuck: I'll bear the responsibility all the same. I'll raise the lad. Will that satisfy society?

Society: We're satisfied. Maßfuck will raise the lad.

Mary: My child's saved!

Thirteen

EPIFIT

"Lord look down on these Thy humble tyrants, who fire their miscreant rounds of miscreant ammunition, on Thy Heart. Fare them well when they encounter the lime." And beyond this, I do not know. The relevant fails. The relevant fails. But it is a hymn, when hymns are not relevant, but to the personal memory that is a basic historical record, and that would be childhood, or mine at least. Still the relevant fails. Push on. Do not stand still. Do not be physically or mentally pulverized, by the evildoers. The relevant nearly makes it. So where do you sleep? You can sleep a long way away from pulverizing people and their instruments. Partially relevant, because partially true only. Deep in the woods, the cabin on the ridge. Fire made, fairly well hidden, especially in winter, when the snow is high to the mile long entrance. Spruces drop over. You ski, on the cross-country skis, into the night. You leave the padded deck. You can do that, especially with night vision. Yes, and then you are away. Have you been followed? No, you are alone. For now. For this night, at least, and you can count on it for a while. Ski, thrash in, the trees, the snow is very high, but tonight is clear, the black sky is full of white stars, unending, practically infinite. Good, go on now. Go further. Cold? Cold. Move, body heat, but keep perspiration down, do not want to be chilled. Too far? No, it is less than a kilometer back to the ridge. And you were never followed, not on this night. Bats, some are about. They comfort, they are like you, it is night vision. And you are also using the echo technique, for you are so smooth, they are beyond you, because the echo is sounding, and sounding is subtle and does not make real noise, it skirts only, and your skis are swishing, and the legs and the upper body, it is a swish in the night. And you are away. You have left their world, and there are boundaries now, where before, but before is gone. They shall never touch you again. And now is the climax of heat. You strip, you pull the wetsuit from your pack, and you slip into it, it is not easy, but it goes. These are cold waters, but that is why you paid so much for this suit, in that shop, that shop in the West, and you are now more ready than before. You slip into the icy water and you are galvanized by the unbearable, bearable cold. The water in the suit begins to work with your body heat, and slowly, more quickly than imaginable, you are in warmth. The same, with your face, there is a mask there, your eyes are going only, and you dive under, your eyes are peeled back, and you are away, you are in the water, submerged and wading forward, the cold night is forgotten. So it is all over now, you need not go further, you are a water animal now and there is no going back. Silence.

Beyond this, there is nothing. There is another season. There is a wall. I climb over it. There are bushes. High. Semi-dense. I move through them. A train passes on the long horizontal mound of bush and gravel overhead and grazes on to the towering cement overpass and then is out of sight. I move further into the

bushes. I defecate. I have Kleenex so I wipe. I cover it up with the mulch and leaves. It leaves a slight stink. I move out from that place. Back onto the path that meanders through the bushes below the train tracks. It is good. A lady passes. She does not see me. She is on the main path, still itself off the beaten track. I let her go. It is the wild green field in the distance under the overpass beyond the perimeter of the bushes and away from the train tracks that I let her go to. I would prefer to stay here. I don't. I move on to the river under the overpass, having crossed the field. The river is not so swift but it is wide and barges pass with flags on them. Sitting under the overpass with my legs dangling down inches from the cement-broken murky water I gaze up at the awnings and imagine finding a place to sleep up there.

But I'm alone, the circle is cold. Sentence: That the change is not organic. That's all I can write. The grammar is a complete delusion and that is more than I should be writing. I dream death. I sit here. My brain is empty. I have not a thought except that there is none. I feel nothing and so I can feel everything that I need. I need nothing. I don't want to write autobiofuck. I don't need you. You're underwritten by delusion. You forfeited everything that belonged to you long ago. You have nothing left except your delusions. Your circle may feel warm to you but you have psychosomatic issues. You're so long dead that it's a miracle that you're reading this. It is a miracle that you have not yet been killed off. I emit sentences from nowhere. "Pull the leash." "Come back up." Peace, I don't care about anything. That's where the road runs. There was such a storm. I was so high. Nothing could stop me. I was eating dead feed in the wood. The dead feed was good. Frostbite. Dead feed. Me. I. Forest. Wood. Gone if imaginable that, I. Gone if imaginable that, I. Dead feed. Frozen fingers. A terrier in the distance. No deer. Deer near. Rank sky. Rank with grey. I, the permanent stranger, lost in the snowy night, rank with grey, looking up at the rank grey sky eastward. I, the remnant, whose Diaries are invincible. Invincible. They cover every aspect of the fundament—my seickness, the world's fock, the silence of the hellish scrape against croff and cunt. And the inductive horizon of all of the aforementioned. Antiliterateurra. The fathomest science. I crill you all elsell else. I, Tess. Tess of The D'Urbervilles.

October 1995—August 2008

WALLS AND BRIDGES

One POSIT ANYTHING

Posit *anything*, and you end up with *real life*: you find yourself crawling through bushes littered with dead leaves and cigarette butts and shot-out bullet shells, and you know that functor, your senses are distilling it and saying, stay here, and they say: *survive*. For you are crawling through the general holocaust, the one that is pervasive, elusive, unmarked, the persisting one that is not obvious to historians because your peers are cowards. So you say, it is the general nature of the problem I am confronting—as you crawl, because you do not think it, you sense it—and its particularist coercion that is so catastrophic to my obstacles: bush, gunmen, govmen, rifle-fire, the germ of the ground. But that is the way it is for man. You stay your course, and determine your safe-houses. You stay that course man, never stop staying that course. It says, survive, that old functor that came before the courts and the injunctions. Flowery as poppy-seed, you promulgate, proliferate your beautiful mien and suggestive body, for it is yours, and it came from a higher source. They say: Stop! Semi-automatic rifle-fire kicking up the dirt and the old bullet shells around you, and you wish for a smoke, for a vacation to an island where the corral reef is still flourishing, and where you can walk the beaches, and taste the local food, but the rifle-fire is one thing that prevents that. It stops. They have gone away. Intimidation tactics, on the off-chance that they might achieve a hit. They didn't. Crawling, then. It is for the cover that you are here, with the germ of the ground and the foxy quiet thrash of the bushes to keep you company, the local store of goods is not so bad. You roll over on your pack and look at the sky, the pack is physically top-heavy so you can rest your head on the extra tuft of cushion that it provides. They say: You can't do this! Come out of the bushes! Face your public! "No!"—you shout back. Rifle-fire: rat-a-tat. . . rat-a-tat. . . rat-a-tat-tat. They are aggressive sometimes. They don't understand that you are using guerilla tactics. They don't know how deep in you really are. They think you are on the edges. You are on the edges. There are only edges in this metropolis (and for that reason you have lost so many of your people, the edge-behavior was too much for them, just don't mention world bank statistics on induced child malnutrition in the border territories). But you are deep in a sovereign state of industrial bush land caked with blown and tumbled refuse and fused by the germ of the ground—they could not fathom this reasoning, this coercive generalization that is so

catastrophic to their means and ends. It is a way of going forward. It is a way of saying to the march of human progress, 'rumble on, I'm listening, I don't miss a word.' The local store of goods is not so bad. Crawling, then, a denizen of this place. Actually the woods are so deep that you can lose your mind in them, and never come back. You might have a criminal wound that you drag on the gill of your ribs and must bandage routinely, but it is a no-returner—a recidivist slip along the plates of a harsh but inevitable in-your-face reality. A reality that savages cigarettes and whores in 48-hour binges in the best and the best of the worst of the world's cities. *Crack!* I'm hit. I'm bleeding. I can bleed. That I can do. You see, I already have it bandaged. I am so quick, I turned on my back so fast and retrieved the thick gauze, then in a movement-and-a-half have it wrapped. (I can thus quantify.) I'm gonna crawl on, in the direction of woods, its edge is two kilometers from here, I have espied it numerous times with a lift of the head. All supplies intact. I may have been born in Oakland California, studied at Berkeley, worshipped Proust, wanted to write to document the American gulag after Solzhenitsyn, but it's a new situation, I drop all that shit and write your shit or their shit, even if it is incoherent, not literary, or just plain shit.

Because it's the coercion of the edges of this industrial no-man's land where weeds and refuse dominate—that they cannot fathom, that I dictate the behavior of the changing functorial shit of them—where, which heap of trash or scrag of tree and where for what purpose, in what time, and how. They, those who scream *Face your public!* are slaves to these dictates of mine. I control the edges. All supplies intact. Make for the woods. Retreat from the adversaries past and present who arrest the permissible categories and avenues of thought and pretend to read your behavior, with return-fire and booby-trapping as you build for an ultimate retrenchment. And it is a fact that you know that existence under fire co-opts retrenchment, reaching deep into the wisdom gnomes of human memory, and that is very fucking comfortable, a vaginal cushion, phallus and earth.

Who owns 51% of the World Bank? The US Treasury. What has Stiglitz called its asset-stripping program? "Briberization." How has he been ostracized? Guess. Why did Timothy McVeigh act? Get it, he felt a justified compulsion to strike back at the federal agencies' and Janet Reno's erudite incineration of the Branch Davidians at Waco, and became convinced, and committed terror. String of events and conscious decisions by a decorated Gulf War Veteran. (This is not a relativization.) Who traveled to Temple Mount, in premeditated criminal provocation, he who is wanted for 1982 war crimes, for his complicit permissiveness of slaughter two decades ago? You know it. Who is to follow? You know it.

I can hear them screaming, from the concrete at the edges: Heretic! Fool! *Terrorist!* "No!" — I shout back. Helicopter overhead, gunner-fire. I am prodigal at this depth in the forest, they cannot hit me. I am a devil here, prepared for martyrdom, out of the fires of literature, of the writers who have passed. If I were to face my public, I would treasure—everything. But the oppressors want it conditionally, they want me dead, in fact they want us dead.

Mien, solid, a gesticulation of my prodigal energy, I am the, the, I have a lorry, love it not, brace for fact, the ministerial bounds: fine, it's gun-ammunitions, anti-tank weaponry. How could I help it? Tatyana!

But there are not only edges—to believe so would be an illusion and self-defeating. There are large internal landmasses that grow like a quiet sex that is old and young at the same time because it is natural and metempsychotic, there where the woodsmen, in conscious premeditation for prevention of the act of danger to the whole or to its parts, go to prune the forest from the stun of wildfire and scourge of termites, there where you can walk to the observation towers which are the wooden stairs to heaven built for the forest so that the valley below is less alien, or more so.

Scourge. The mite of the mind, a cousin's penny. The starry sound of my lips, an uncle's cancer, his malfeasance. The cardinal's mastery of his killing floor. No, man does not exist. He couldn't, it would be too horrible. He is not here and he never was. He is there, where there is nothing to do and nothing to say. A leather reign passes over the sky, and it is the first deed. We are happy. Happy in this. We, the descendants, are happy. But we are not happy, we are angry, our children do not have enough of the right foods, it is a ghetto that the armies of your empire have turned our communities into, our history, our souls, our bodies. . . our children, who are our hearts even more than our future, a ghetto, a Warsaw in the midst of a criminal rendering of international law.

But I will not change with the seasons. I will continue as always. Well, the deer feed. . . gone since the weeks before from the trough. Bunker, built. Cut shrubs, circled up as shores and breakwaters to the sun, scattered across the forest helter-skelter, so near, across some stretches of flat and hilly forest, the fresh water lake, reserved for the wildlife, but the waters so fine in forbidden night swimming, the reeds and low freshwater depths so clean to the naked skin, so upright in my groin, the fleshy rod that she fondles, because her fingers work as a silky, labial reed. My grandfather's hands, old, I saw them, splaying the sunset through the fir trees, a passing. Cut up inside I was, sewn up all round, not changing with the passing of the season. With the death expression, F2, verbal reports reach a level of importance not quite reportable but very great, in the light, in the light . . . I will stay death away until it comes. Let men turn the dial of death with bombs and the retardation of the flesh, I will let it run straight through my gut and mind if it must, but I will not change, I will continue as always. Because, as I wrote, if I consider the length of time I have been here, and the length of time since I left, there is a length in me that runs straight through my gut—and it says, Life is hell, with beauty in it. I will continue as always, with the changing of the seasons. It is the only way to live, not to say to survive. . . and survive tough with a strong and aware psyche. 'But what about those whose flesh will be retarded, by the bombs and the misuse of light?' I will walk to the forest troughs and pick at the dead feed and watch the deer come to life because replenishment and rejuvenation is inevitable in the woods. This is, in fact, retrenchment. I am not ashamed of that fact, and I am

confident in its utility. And then: what if a poem was like a walnut, and that the only important thing was that it got written down. Well it was that, *before* I learned the truth about wartime vivisections. Before I learned that prison is the ultimate edifice and that murder too often the only vintage available. Before I was able to imagine a man on the cement ground of Guantanamo Bay, rolled up in a ball, layers of clothing around him, dark skin, his ribs pulled in like the external parts of a sea shell, his arms wrapped around his head, being kicked by black policing boots, hit with white batons—several guards, several interrogators, a band of clappedclapping morons, yet this sea-shelled man knowing he has the moral sanction and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on his side. All the way from Gdansk to the clerical, these trees have the longest memory. As long as there is more to say, we are not dead. Forgive me for breaking that taboo, Mossad, it fit into my scheme of things at the moment of writing, you see, a writer cannot help these things, and for that he is certainly a cruel interrogator. Still, I was not part of the conspiracy, right? I mean the general one, the one that bespeaks the universal Diaspora. I lament uncontrollably and without literary forethought, therefore: ‘There was a story, and the story was of a nation. Goddamn, don’t let it go. It is the only thing that will save you. Stendhal, modern social Cardinals. Hume-en aid.’

I have laid booby-traps—guerrilla words, phrases, and sentences.

Two LIVING WITHOUT BROKERS

I killed the broker after I bought the farmhouse. I knew what I needed to do there and it had nothing to do with brokers. The rafters were breaking and the must and the cobwebs dominated the interior. I did not intend to do repairs. I wasn’t going to whitewash the exterior. What I needed to do there was to live without brokers. I did not need or want to tell the world anything. My words therefore were also not brokers. Words, even one’s own, are also usually brokers. I killed that also. The scent of my body was left in the large absence of the dead abscess of brokers. In the rooms and in their former contrivances of drawers and closets. Outside around the property in the flats of grasses and in and around the fall-down barns. I shat like a monster there—the stink was wild. The wiping suffered blood on the newspapers or my hands. My asshole and digestive system suffered wildly there. It was the certain price for eating what was wild: degenerate winter apples. The latter is not a trope. A reader would not think this: he would think it a trope. But he would be wrong. My asshole and digestive system suffered wildly there. It was the certain price for eating what was wild: degenerate winter apples. I wore my night-goggles at night. I prowled the woods beyond the property. I killed mid-sized animals for regeneration of my digestive system. ‘Coon, fox, deer, wild pig. Soon I was not shitting like a monster and

my stink was normal: The blood of the kill was terrific. Never kill the Reaper. In fact at the farm you stick by this rule. It is more than a rule of thumb or even an unsexed practice, it is a blood rule that is conscious. No, I would keep no X-Men on my property—they would burden the rule with false gods and broker a temple. Of course, they would never get that far with me around. God help the X-Man that believes he can stray onto my property. God help that man.

The fact that I feed birds, suggested by the bird-house on your right hand side, should give him no comfort. On the other hand it could have been left there by the previous owner. But I do feed birds, and there is comfort for the birds only: the bird-house is no romance-broker for X-men or any charlatan-trespassers!

The Deed is mine. The Papers are mine. Stay away. I'm watching you. I've got cameras all over. I've got tools. I'll trace you in the day and I'll trace you in the night and calculate the retracement spread. And you think I'm fucking kidding. Woe, Woe to Thee. There is nothing but reality here. This is not fiction. This is not autobiography. Be very, very careful.

Three FAIL-SAFE

When the rafters began to breakdown more seriously I started to move into my stretch-zone. The world became green. The farmhouse stretched a rectangular 30 meters so I stretched the tarpaulin a full thirty plus the pitching of it to the ground. In these days I seriously thought about an abuse of the rifle. Something kept me alive though, from doing it. Not because of the more serious breaking-down of the rafters and the need to pitch the tarpaulin, but because—I don't know why. Existential doubts. But I had singled out a room for it. I had even singled out the wall. A little bit of carnage and skull-debris, and that would be it. The room remained devoid of such an instance however. One day a helicopter made some savvy blade moves over my property, sometimes directly over the farmhouse, zooming in on my whereabouts and rough activities. I watched and photographed it in several positions. The zoom success of the digitized photographs of the helicopter proved the potential success of the rifle on the same target. The rifle remained inside and untouched. Merely the natural thought of the possibility was somewhat invigorating. Not more. I had no words for the pilot since I cared not for his intentions. I had no fail-dead intentions, and had outgrown the infantilism of switches (dead-man's switches to be precise). I did have some fail-safe intentions though, which I began to work out after the incident. The river down over the mountain played a large part in those plans. So did the seasonal deer paths. An asymmetry began to be apparent and realizable although from my side completely inane and unnecessary. I lived with no mental, physical, metaphorical, ideological, or religious brokers or brokers

of any kind, I was a safe man. Harmless unless seriously provoked and looking down on incitement of any sort as infantile and stupid.

I swear to fucking God I'll knife you if you tell anyone.

Four BENIGN

I use industrial markers to make my way from the farm and the property when I must go to arrange certain matters. I have my sources, that should not be in doubt. Still, it is not far to go, it is an run-down textile mill in the mountains that I go to. My sources are conscientious, hygienic, and trustworthy. They keep a broad selection of newspapers on hand for me, which usually start at the time that I last visited. Some electronic articles are also sometimes there for me in hardcopy, having been printed out somewhere else—a somewhere else that I need not know about. I am there only for the information and to greet the people who are not only sources but also friends. We do not know whether there will be a revolution, and we do not incite. We are political, but we are not activists. But in matter of fact, there is no “we.” They are more akin to the Quakers, while I am a solitary who pitches, calibrates, and then tests stretch-zones and fail-safe plans. It is a form of a deeper contemplation of the risks and ugliness of man’s reality that I exercise. My friends are devoted to me but I am sometimes sorry that I do not possess their pragmatic but other-worldly discipline. But it would be impossible. I maintain a meditative state of mind, but I am willing to provoke and be very difficult should the powers break their charter and a revolution begin to foment. It is the last thing I want, but it is the first thing that I would do: I would bury them alive with the violence of indictments. Contrary to centuries of blood and cess and bleth, the individual mind is endowed with that very nobility of corrective prosecution. I will say this though, in order that mind be able to do this, your fellow men must not be entirely subjugated. There must still pour the tears of endurance and even hope, and there must at least be some rare instances of humour in their faces. They may not be the prosecutors themselves, but without them society will have no room for the indictments you draft.

It is time I went in. The snow is coming down very hard now, in hails of flurried patches and white-spotted dots. I have a fire burning in the great hall of the 30 meter L farmhouse (30L). It burns on hard rock-tile floors and I have a system by which the tarpaulin that is stretched by my pitching of it acts both as a tepee would but also as a circulator of heat through draft-channels created by the way in which the tarpaulin was stretched and pitched in accordance with the structure of the building itself. It is one of my few inventions here: it was borne of necessity, I cannot allow myself to freeze to death or my brain to fail my

intellect. The latter would be a living tragedy, the former would simply put an end to that possibility.

But perhaps I am being too phlegmatic. For as God is my witness, do *not* Fuck with me. I am not casual, and I have no need of behavioural alibis. Except for the occasional cigarette, I am prepared to leave my torturers no room to move. In, or out, of 30L. I have lost *none* of my tradecraft. I have an *abundance* of uninhabited forest at my disposal. You can have no *idea* of what I have or have not wrought there. Have you 'rd'f bleth-falling! Even if you had done some etymology work, it would be much worse than you would think.

You poor, stupid assholes. Don't you even realize?

Five I WENT IN

A runner came to inform me of events. He carried material from my sources' archives. I looked into it for a few minutes. *Then I went in*, to suffer the winter. I hid like a wild *boar* and packed my *bio* in like a *squirrel*. The snows were deep and temps were arctic—it was an arctic freeze. I had to leave 30L behind: I implemented my fail-safe plan, the one that I had never wanted to, the only one I had never wanted to. The content of the material that the runner had handed over to me left me no choice. I had feed, light-weight-gas with a slow burn-off rate, modern equipment and the best thermals that money can buy—an array of all such required store. And a lot of dry, solid cash—US dollars—tucked safely, dryly. I studied, ate, drank, urinated, shat. I dug deeply into classified material on surveillance programs. I came to the inevitable conclusion that our application of technology was going to devour us, finally and once and for all. TECH, as I began to refer to it for studious purposes, was the only thing that the MEAN (another such word I used) regimes of the twentieth century had been missing. *Now* they had it. Like a Buddha, I would sometimes just sit in my raging thermals and watch with mystification the graceful movements of a deer family of five or six or seven, and the more jerking movements of other forest animals, like squirrels, hedgehogs, and the ever-resourceful small birds. One afternoon I saw the aftermath, it could not have been more than a couple of hours old, of a plane crash—military personnel. I came on from a hilltop; they were strewn like black dots against the snow in a cleared space surrounded by pine. The plane had wiped that patch of forest away. I went down, to see if there were any survivors. There was one, and I applied aid to him. He moaned. I did all I could. Then I heard the search and rescue choppers. I left the man and hurried back up the hill. Somehow they landed. It was nothing but reconnaissance. No aid was given, some bodies were kicked for signs of life, and that was all. I guess my man had died. Photographs were taken. They left. I stayed in the area for a few

days, and the men, the black dots, stayed, positions unchanged. No choppers, no men on foot, no rescue, no recovering of the bodies. They were assigned the collective grave of the place of their death. The spring was coming, so the snow was thawing—the stench began to make me sick, so I left the area. So this is what it had come to, you see. I simply shot myself in the direction of the heart. It did not hit the heart but left collateral damage. I am trained and was supplied, I applied self-aid. It healed. One day the same runner came for me and found me in my foxhole. He told me the genocide in Darfur had spread to Chad.

I had to travel, urgently.

I was like a monk at the airports and train and bus terminals: Invisible, incognito; a traveler from anywhere, ‘indigenous’ to anywhere in the western hemisphere: I fitted in. That was all that was important. The back channels and the final legs were the most challenging. They always had been. I had committed as much as possible of the paperwork I had received to memory. My tradecraft was permanent for the time, even if they ‘rendered’ me, ‘disappeared’ me while in one of the corners of my necessary journey. Rendition would become even a more necessary part of my journey if that were to happen. The old rules still applied, the ones that had come from my best teachers, the ones who were trying to track me now: let adrenaline and mission co-sponsor each other, you are never a criminal if your mission is right, and don’t make mistakes. My teachers had been good and had believed in their work. They had believed they were right. Perhaps they were at that time. But they had lost balance and were no longer right. Because of this they were making mistakes and felt the criminal guilt. I had all three rules down on them. I could move faster. I could anticipate. I could be prepared to incorporate any eventuality into my mission as a necessary part of it, and be right about it. The logic was unbeatable.

So I wrote: ‘Write.’ I wrote. I wrote, ‘I’ve really got to leave you.’ *Then I went in.*

Six — 15 C

I am violent now. But I am still quiet. I am still a stag who moans with the haunting of his male desperation in the pitch-dark night of the woods. It chills civilized men to their bones.

I don’t know when the time will come. I just know that it will. There is no transcendence. There is only the primitive and partial crafts. Art and guns prove that. I never actually made it out of Chad. Neither did the human race. When I flew into Schipol in Amsterdam, I had made my way through and then from

certain unnamed Arab Gulf States. Then from Schipol to Warsaw, and from there to Gdansk. There were no honest Christian clerics there. Only ruins of the Dock Workers' Union remained. Advertisements for a shack. I told the driver to drive me South. It was -15°C . It didn't get warmer, the road just got darker and the snow heavier. The driver was young and capable. Vast swathes of forest mixed with agricultural planes, and old patched-up shelters—passed, the shelters, one every several kilometers or so, burning coal to keep the inhabitants inside from freezing. It was at least a three-hour drive, across windy, bad roads, and it was past 01:00. The driver knew every turn. He was competent and young and good looking and smart, a realist. There were no highways in that part of the country whatsoever. He had to know.

The destination point had been set up for me by a journalist friend of mine. It took a dirt road into the forest to get me there. The driver had already been paid for his silence. There stood a kind of cabin, in any case, a shelter, gathering snow around it. With the driver gone, the first thing I did was heat. There had been prepared a winter's worth of good stove burn-wood for me. There was a pair of cross country skis in a high closet, and poles and boots that fit me. There was plenty of state-of-the-art thermal clothing, hand and leg and foot ware, and the rest. Even a loaded rifle. Other equipment. Foods, of course. I settled in. There was a good bed in the only separate room. Without a meal, exhausted, with the place getting heated, I went to sleep in the bed. The covers were large and encompassed me, and I drifted immediately into sleep in what can only be described as deep satisfaction and relief. I was finally out.

Seven

THE A.D.—Testament

"So let us get visceral here. I'm no juju man. I was faintly surprised by the emphasis, to tell you the truth. So when the nice gentlemen came around and prowled the cabin, I paled him full of led. This is no sonata—sorry, *not*. Therefore, let us move on. He had been trailing me for too long and he should have known it. You're a fool to trail a man like me for too long and not expect payback.

"I didn't like the year before. It was a stinking year. Cops, drones, bitches, missile systems. Very few journalists were writing out the truth. Robert Fisk was trying hard to. Noam Chomsky came out with his usual tripe. He's usually right, technically speaking. That's his problem. He's a technician, and I hate a technician's dreary, faux-rationalist invective as much as I hate a technician's cops, drones, bitches, and missile systems. I say *fuck Chomsky*, especially for his callous remarks on 9/11. He's a crusty, arrogant, brutal, cultic, and frustrated old man. Fisk came out with the greatest horror and was appalled at 9/11, called it a crime against humanity. So much for the two men holding hands in the Quad.

"So when I filled the nice gentlemen full of led, I had already known for a long time that he was not a proxy technician. He was a trained professional. Not that well trained though it appears now. I had no idea who put him onto me, that is the truth. That he did well. But I knew how he liked his coffee as much as he knew how I liked mine. He just should have stopped. It would have been so much easier. But he was on a payroll so the guy didn't have much of a choice (it's not the money in the payroll that does that). And so I didn't. Bless his goddamned heart. I guess this is a sonata after all. But that's just not true. There's a story, somewhere here.

"So someone or something put him onto me. He didn't leave any identity papers on his person or in his apartment. And all the rest, he had done it well. No real bits to go on. Damned squalid place he lived in though. Says something about the man usually, not his compensation. Let's say someone had been put on to Stendhal 278 years ago. Doesn't help me. Sometimes such thoughts help (no they do not, that's a lie, I was not thinking, that was a mistake not to think). No, this was different. I didn't leave any family around to check on, whom he could have checked on, it just happened that way in my life, it didn't come of my agency. Friends, same thing, except a couple of very well covered ones in Europe. They would have informed me.

"So when I filled the nice gentlemen full of led, I knew it was more than just the shell-shock of combat-zone write-out, and the *very short-story-lives* of kids getting killed by bombs exploding in their near, private adjacencies in war zones like Lebanon and Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq. Please note: I am not propogating a gun-meme with these words. I have no issues with my phallus, just with those who have issues with theirs; and who therefore go on and move on to propagate the gun-meme for the higher purposes of killing children.

"Bitches, missile systems. Cops, drones. Pylons, cement barricades; all encumbering the wisdom and heritage of the fare and the cloth. And now, the force of the cheap, incompetent end of it is inconceivably powerful-destructive, mon.

"And so what if I am part of that culture; of gun and phallus as one malleable source of conventional and unconventional violence; would it make a difference? No bitch, no drone, no cop, it wouldn't, because I am also a part of the other culture, you know, the one that wants to purge you drones, you bitches, you cops, along with your delivery systems. I am a whole being. I cannot be split-up. If you are a nice gentleman, learn this. I'll help you. Smell my cloth, enter my fare; feel the thobe of my neighbor and smile. Then I shall not have to pale you full of led."

June 2002—October 2009

BARTHOLOMEW, STORMBRINGER

One HE BRINGS A STORM

“He brings a storm and dies. Then we have the dawn again; and man lives and; and he comes again and doesn’t die.”

Bartholomew waited. He waited a long time. The single eon it takes for an angel to learn to cry. That is a long time, it is not geological time, but it is long. Then he descended; he did not land, he descended; he was able to walk and use gravity. Walking on the pavement, on the sidewalks, mixing with teeming humanity. And it was immediate; it was the natural and automatic start of what an earthly being will do, without regard for being coiled up by a mortal noose or being resurrected by another and who by comparison finds it infinitely difficult to know himself.

The first thing: he turns in a circle to look around, he really circles: again, teeming humanity. “It really is easier for a man to resurrect another than it is for him to know himself,” he says, remembering the lesson, feeling the logic of the multitude with the arithmetic of his aural and corporeal presence in it; he said it to the strength and degree of approximating a mineral element in a rock formation huddled under the sea with a school of ten thousand fish swirling and oxygenating in the over-wash of the waves on the tidal rocks: multitudes. To work, to go to friends’, to search for a bite to eat.

He carried an empty notebook. It started to rain lightly. The feathery drops hit the book: the sound of light rain falling on parchment: dip, dip, dip-itty-dip (a leaf up-ends the fall), dip-dip. Intoxicated by it, Bartholomew dropped his eyes and looked at the damp grey water-marks newly birthed on the cover, like pen-marks on a dune. “Rain on parchment is a good affair,” he said. It somehow seemed sufficient to him. Ah, but all was sufficient, wasn’t it? It was a mildly enacted self-scolding, something penitent and real and therefore something he had grown used to, as one does.

Intoxicated by the rain on the paper, he had a sudden urge to know the time. He tried to stop someone, then saw a plain thirty-something lady standing at a corner. He approached her, and said, “I’m so sorry, but I don’t know what time it is.” He framed it as an assertion, like a child might. But was it not also adaptive, an older covenant in the man? The lady seemed startled, then she lifted her arm to look at her watch. “Why, it’s 11:30,” she said, looking directly into

his eyes. "That would be morning, wouldn't it? I'm sorry, it's just that I really don't know," he inquired. "Well, you're right. It is indeed morning," the plain and now more pretty lady said. This prettier being took a light breath then said, "If you really want to know, it will be afternoon in one half of an our." She was very clear about it.

Bartholomew was excited by this, it seemed that he could ask this lady what he wanted to. "Aha yes! That's how we count the cusps off!" The plain lady was ready to answer this; her astonishment had not yet cast itself over her mind: as tides do corral reefs, the reef of her mind, the un-servant, the kind quill in an old master's hand but she was not a marionette. So she said, "That's right. A very interesting way to put it," she quipped dryly, softly fond, soft fondness; the dryness of the quip was desperately attractive to him; he sighed, and his groin hurt for a moment.

The plain pretty lady understood his idiomatic speech, it seemed. And she had humor, dry but sweet, as younger old maids do sometimes: part of the dryness was her defensive caution, which was a part of her character, but the other part of it was real: there was a plentiful kernel of arduous mirth behind it, waiting, impatient like a first kiss: a spark in her plain demeanor, o, but a meteor ready to break through the atmosphere; a quiet, giggling orgasm!

There was a silence. It was common for Bartholomew, these silences. So the lady said, "It's at that time that we usually eat." She saw his absent stare: "Lunch," she said: "The mid-day meal." She emphasized her speech with psychological diacritics; Bartholomew's left eyebrow lifted in curiosity, the other expressive mechanisms of his human face following in creases and lines and the unique stretches of curvature over the cavities of his frontal skull. Then strangely again came the absence in his eyes, his face an open book, like an amazed child waiting in anticipation of the adult's words and actions, like there might be candy in the deal; or like an autistic, like there might be anything, where anything is utterly exceptional and to be desired as long as it is given, proffered: "We have three meal-times," she said. "Breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Traditionally speaking, anyway; if not universal, then, for the most part—" she stopped for a moment, cutting herself off, now finally astonished: she had just used the word 'universal' in a discussion about meals, the luminal waters surging over her long abandoned, frail, and unmarried/one-time deflowered pools and reefs, flooding them with a strange mercy, a mercy as liquid and powerful as sperm; she cut off that flow immediately though: too late for what had already taken place, but in time to think: thinking that there was a fundamental need for expedience with this person, coming to her rampant and untapped potential for extreme understanding, struggling with it, to conquer it, an 'it' that was present for the first time in her life; so she continued the sentence: "—for the most part, we have three, three meals." It was good fare.

She was nervous but not nervous. She was in a state of soul and mind. And there was again a silence. She started to count inside. She wondered in a momentary flight of her thoughts why she was not walking away, then cut the thought off. Finally Bartholomew spoke up. "I remember," he said: "It was like that in

the old colonial ruin and the garden. Piers did most of the meal preparations. Evan liked to be served, but gave instructions to Piers when Piers was behaving stupidly or couldn't remember how Evan, or Evan thought someone else, liked it prepared. Jude usually helped Piers, as a kind of unwilling but also willing assistant, but he could equally side with Evan, if you could call it that really, and find a pretext there to make fun of Piers and tease him with what amounted to annoyed aggression, on Jude's part. Piers never minded it; he enjoyed it, he liked to get a rile out of Jude (it always came out like that in the end, the other way around from how Jude had aimed it), it gratified him and he knew that Jude would eventually succumb to his (Piers') blissful indifference to his (Jude's) proddings."

The plain lady knew she was in the presence of a madman or of a person suffering from some sort of brain lesion. She asked, calming herself, learning as she went along, on the fly, circumscribed by necessity's inventions: "And what did you do?" "I watched," said Bartholomew. "Always?" the plain lady asked, her nerves settling for reasons she could not define. "Almost always," said Bartholomew.

He went quiet then. The two of them were still standing at the corner, cars rushed by, a man hailed: "Taxi!" Neither of them moved their heads. She watched Bartholomew, then with consideration and a bit of calculated judgment as to the content, decided to break the silence with another offering: "I'm going for lunch, and I will get a sandwich." She specified this very adroitly, on purpose. "Would you like to get a sandwich for your mid-day meal? It's time for that now. You can come with me if you like. I am going anyway." It just all came out of her. She spoke to him not like he might be a child, but like he might have been one at one time.

Bartholomew nodded and looked at her. Then he quickly moved and jugged himself out with long strides to be the first to cross the street. With a little amazement she followed him and when she caught up to him they walked a few blocks together, in silence, concentrated on their walking, to a little quiet diner, where the teeming multitudes had long tapered away and people walked as recognizable individuals with recognizable and unique tasks, like going to a liquor store or taking a run, an old man walking his dog, which was still unusual in this part of town: strange, to see an old man walking his dog here.

"Two pastrami sandwiches please," the pretty lady said. "No onions. And two bags of chips, and two 7-ups," she said to the man behind the counter. She knew this was the easiest way: just to do it. The man behind the counter worked on the sandwiches while they waited. Neither of them spoke. The man looked up at them with a twist in his brow as if he were making a reconnaissance effort with the aim of possibly shooting more interventionist stares. The plain pretty lady noticed this and quickly and aggressively looked him straight in the eye. She was very fierce, experiencing after long years the intoxicating compression of riding a steep learning curve and not falling off. The man making the sandwiches felt defeated and sullenly then unconsciously went back to preparing the sandwiches, the chips, and the drinks. He placed them on the counter and the

lady side-stepped away from Bartholomew to the cash register. Bartholomew saw his opportunity and lunged forward and stretched his arms and took the sandwiches, chips, and drinks over to a table where he placed it all smack dab in the middle of it. The lady came over to the table and sat down and pretended to marvel a little at the accomplishment while not feigning anything. "I got them for us," Bartholomew said, happily noticing her reactions, having hoped that they would be like that. "Then I brought them over here," he continued, avid, smiling. "I noticed," she replied. "I knew you had to settle an account with the man, so I thought, 'I'll get these myself for the both of us,'" he said. "And so you did," she said, smiling, breathing a little bit, but smiling. "Yes," he said, as he sat himself down.

Ruminoid the Watcher sat at another eating table, a few seats down from the girl and Bartholomew. He had used the waitress instead of a counter order. He watched the two of them while he sipped on his Coke; he was getting to the point where he'd have to start slurping on it with his extra-long straw. He himself felt dreamy today: 'It's the sun,' he thought. He was always careful about his judgments. It was part of how he was made, of how he was: He felt that this girl might be just the right thing for Bartholomew right now, just what the doctor ordered; at least at this juncture. That was that for him; like a master detective, once concluding and verifying a hunch as a fact, he quickly moved on: Content that the situation was under control and having apprehended for himself the aura and the nature of it, he looked over and up at the waitress with a friendly expression of inquisitive desire, more desire and more inquisitiveness than the waitress appreciated; he was quite happy with himself about it, and in general; he felt good today. He asked for the check, please. She turned away from him with an aggressive but provocative swing of her hips, and he took a last drag on his straw, slurping the sweet icy brown liquid into his mouth, jostling it under his tongue. Then he left money with a nice but unexaggerated tip billeted under the ash-tray: He loved this element, he always had. He'd have to tease Cosmo about it. Cosmo would wince and quietly give up on him and just ask for the progress.

Two THE OLEANDER

"This is where the garden was; it's here. The Oleander. Still here. Next to this hydrant."

"It was here?" she asked. "In this vacant lot?" He had gone over it with her while they walked from the diner to the spot. She had not been incredulous, she had been again stupefied, the waters washing over the reefs of her mind. "Yes," he said. "It was right here." "Where is everything else?" she said, concerned,

but about what she did not know precisely; it was open-ended: and then her brow slaughtered all obstacles to that infinity, she was ruthless; one thing she did know was that she could not afford not to be.

"The Grating's gone, Trish, it's not possible to ask where it went." "But. . ." she said, shaking her head at herself and at him and at the nature of things. "I understand and I know," said Bartholomew, "but it's not possible to answer. Think of it, Trish. Think of it as delight," he said, trying to comfort her, but meaning it in full. "Delight?" she asked, stunned, but not necessarily unreceptive if she were to get a proper answer; like a scientist or a mathematician, just wanting to know the true nature of the thing. "Just that. It's all delight," said Bartholomew. "Don't you see, everything is sufficient, and that's the delight." Bartholomew paused, as Trish tried to comprehend, or at least to understand, to combine, deconstruct, and re-combine and resolve, at least in part. Then Bartholomew decided to say nothing, and they walked. They walked away, and went on their way home. She had some partials now, but she had been wise enough to let them go and enjoy the walk with this man. "This man 'Bartholomew'," she thought.

Three

WAKING AND SLEEPING

She woke up in the morning in Bartholomew's arms, they were coiled together like spiders. She ached between her legs and held herself there, trying not to wake him; holding hard, she whispered, "ouch." She knew it had not been his fault; he had been big, but she had not given up pieces of her skin in coitus for a long time.

Bartholomew woke up, moving his head sideways beneath her right breast; she removed her arm from below and smiled down at him as he moved his head up from the pillow and dragged it across her breast as she swelled from the touch and took his arm up off from her back and placed it lower on her body letting it lie there over the curvy valley of her buttocks. "You smell," he said, Trish held back from answering, and said nothing, she put the hand that had comforted her pain to her nose she could smell it she said nothing "Did you sleep well?" "I think I had dreams," "What do you think you dreamt of?" "I, m-, "—"I don't remember" he put his head back down near to her breast in the couplets of her armpit and the skin of her inner limb his hair dragging across it as she sighed, suddenly: images now and he was in the nearest sight of his goal that of rewriting his father's books of implanting into them the diverse treatises of the man's heart the licorice of his basal words on the histories of what he had written to give now to the pages the mystery and the pedestrian fogs and sunlight of those insights that he his father had obtained in prior time to the needs of the clerisy when in the after-come of that he his father had had no

choice but to certify that he was of them of they who were the clerisy; at that young age in which period he his father had been forced to make radical edits to his original work lest it not only be discarded but lest that he awaken the wrath of the cognoscenti still at that time in that period still nominally bourgeois and liberal but ever on the cusp and his father had not been stupid he was not blind to cusps whilst he sighted this the cusps that could criminalize Donovan Rand his friend and co-author of many of his works whose children had grown up with his father's children meaning Bartholomew and his sisters. Bartholomew spoke 'I sometimes wonder who's doing the thinking' he blurted it in this half-sleep it was like in a seizure a contumacious convulsion coming from his mouth. His eyes opened for a moment he looked deeply into Trish's eyes "I'm h'd out, Trish," he said "those old fields are evil I remember them and now no one will pay because no one can play anymore they're dead." It was the first time he had spoken to her like this it couldn't be defined it but it melted her heart, "my darling," she whispered "my sweet" cupping his head and pressing her lips to his "my dear Barthy rest go back to sleep." Now conscious having heard his name from her lips he let his head fall back on the sheets his lily temples resting there and doing eternity's fragile and fitful sleep.

* * *

"Where am I?" he insisted his eyes like darts hitting every point in the room wide, wide and staring like the jackal his eyes, "Who are you?" "Who *are* you?" he demanded having stopped the movement of his eyes fixing his gaze on her. She stumbled through the blocks of her mind confused scared and afraid, "I'm Trish, don't you remember?" Bartholomew went quiet and looked down seemingly at the bed but really into nowhere. "I see," he said. "It's like that," he said, to her, for her, she still said nothing she was still almost petrified. "Of course I know who you are," he said trying to mellow his voice yes to comfort this unknown being whom he now knew he had ravished and loved the night before just hours before now knowing it without remembering and being well aware of that. Then he sat up and put his hands on her shoulders, she quivered with a hard loosening of herself, scared of the hands on her. He moved his thumbs gently into the muscles of her shoulder-blades. Suddenly something happened She let her head and her mass of brown hair fall back into his hands hands that opened for this and received her nape-side her eyes closed mouth open and he touched her neck now and used all of his fingers his whole hands spread out to please her and now as it was to please him, "Trish," he said, "Trish," and she said "darling, just let me say darling to you." He turned her around and held her like a man this time as the early moments of coitus flowered, 'Perhaps it's London in the summer time,' he said to himself just before he lost himself moments after she had already done the same. (A carnival of evil and dedication. One man-ghost above earth stringing a bubble around him, half-dead lying in the ward like Adam. The fat obsequious warden walked in: "Get Up!" he says. He keeps his eyes closed; he is in reflective angry militant meditation. She sighs *London, London, London. The Ground*, she sighs. The Ground. 'Please press your fingers into my body; I'm liquid, Barthy, it will be painless then.' He was amazed at how much he could trust her that she knew that she knew everything. 'I'd love half-

dead for you, darling,' she sighed, moving her neck and head up to his pulling his neck and head down to hers. 'I'd love dead for you darling.' 'Don't say that, don't say that Trish.' 'But I would,' 'I know, but don't say it, my darling, don't say it, please don't say it.' 'I'll never say it again,' Trish said as she kissed his mouth and he kissed her back.)

He awoke in the morning. She was in his arms. She cuddled up to him in her sleep. The sun came in through the window. He lifted her head gently so that she lay on the pillow as he got up off the bed. He stood and slipped into a pair of sandals. He walked through the hallway to the door and then down the stairs to the door to the street. He stepped outside and walked down the steps. No one was out yet, even though it was a big city. He looked around, turning his head. Then he turned it the other way very slowly, facing the truth with his eyes: the light was upon him, a form that dwarfed the meaning of the city that he stood in. It faded. He darted his head immediately to look over across the street. The light came up again and forced Ruminoid out of his hiding place behind the trash cans on the other side of the street. Bartholomew had already turned to walk back up the stairs. As he pushed his hand slowly towards the door knob he heard a scream: "Run Bartholomew!" Bartholomew turned and saw a pair of eyes dying in a whirlwind of ash. Bartholomew looked up at the light that towered over the eyes. He ignored it like it was a dog and opened the door slowly and walked in. The Light flew at the door. Bartholomew could hear a terrible screech. He did not turn but walked up the stairs and slipped quietly back to bed with Trish. He was happy. He lay back with his head on the pillow with his hands behind his head. He smiled and looked at the beautiful wooden musty ceiling. Trish crawled up onto him and rested her sleepy head on his chest. He was very happy. Really.

Four CEDARS OF LEBANON

Here's to turning a new leaf over. The science of sciences, the art of arts. The cedars of Lebanon are badly scuffed and charred but still alive. I existed long before democracy but I am still alive. Didn't Adam? I hear a resounding "Yes." There were long moonshot days shot even more by the sun as the day increased. The dawns were rare. You can imagine then how I longed for quantal significance. Just a bare chest on which to write the presumed days without scuffing the skin or damaging the heterogeneous hair follicles that had been allowed to scam the bosoms and tummies of men and women (more crock-splice than planar ample) since seaweeds scammed the sea while Triton dropped conches to quiet them.

Those were un-crowded times. The inlets to the Nile were great and advantageous deltas. River birds lived in the reeds nesting there with their cocky-rung young, unlikely prey for the alligators who fed on antelope and

large game, energy-lading the 'gators for weeks at a time; and generally safe from the swimming black mamba that prissy-and-cat-like prefers the trees, and the hornet viper that lives out in the desert where there may be some irrigation lets but not enough to coax intelligent river birds.

It's clear isn't it that the chests of letters in the huts and the dugouts did not need sustenance from empiria? Mamba, Bird, Viper, 'Gator, everyone, had already been used to everything for ages. The grist for the mill was the given *the given the given the given*. All that was left was everything: that you'd one day finish the race untaxed and with that with a groined hurl you'd throw your known days into the air at the sky and that would be a victory, the victory of victories. For once, the banishment of dismal thoughts as certain the next day as death the next year, and the sun forever. Lithic, young preponderance in the terra falling into the sea and breaking on the showered-ebb-and-flow of the turning dust-shine-sand and audibly rolling pebbles and the larger lichen and mollusked rocks. You see how happy I must have been. I did not want to be paired with a ringing silo. I wanted to stand alone with the others in the even constancy of quiet daily grists and unheard but present cycles, alone with the others: the reptiles, the birds, the waters, the sands, the mud, the reeds, the mollusks, the lichen, the rocks, the pebbles, the dry-nose smell of the desert coming in to me with the winds.

Today, if I write a book, our historical method of whatever family and full-stop. Life gutted by the unplugged diarrhea of empiria from a hundred million advocating assholes. Making of the staggering eternally forked and brightly dusted light an arcane misery, it is the saddest thing, it is a crime: abetted because of legality by the preponderance of dismal thoughts. My choice is to become Ibsenesque, to see the girl die under *the* black-marked wings of the caged swan. I cannot get closer to the voices. They are the *only* black-marked wings of any sort of bird to have been caged by a tragedian in recorded history. So I must be Ibsenesque, to create a race that close to the voices. A literary race, but none the less, none the less, I tell you. Spurned, carping, fishing at night and scowling at the day-men in their winged capes. Gorging on fish. Saying God Aorta Mine, God-Vein, not all in vain, 'let us gather wing to the night air' and they are serious, even if they are fools. Which they are. But they have friends who are not fools and who are equally serious. They are not the fools' demons. In the mirror of the Anthropolos they are identical: dead-ringer blinkered horses of the apocalypse both of them. They are less sly but more cunning. They are better at chess. They are rooted. They have centre and do not live in a moral void. They do not fart at each other and howl with laughter. But they are serious, as serious as bagged-sickles fucking the air, as bicycles fucking the air and fucking it with discipline. They are not spurned because they do not shout from their curtained rooms in the daytime, scaring the day-men as their soul-brothers do. They do not carp and sulk as their soul-brothers do. They have their own spiritual adumbrations but they do not say God Aorta Mine, God-Vein, not all in vain, and so forth. They ride their bicycles, while their soul-brothers drive and enjoy shitting pollution in the faces of the day-men, for which reason they drive the shittiest cars in the busiest areas at night, disturbing celebrities at their red-carpet galas and blowing approaching whores in the dust, bearing their smiling teeth at children like faggots on a honeymoon. Hooligans, all in all. But they

respected their cousins, their reasonable brothers-of-the-night, they worshipped their intellects without jealousy, they were grateful and adoring. They received tolerance and forgiveness in return but with no strings attached. The author cannot think of anything sweeter. Not of something to write, but of something that *is*. The relationship was sweet. It was the ambition behind it that made it disciplined though, and, when brought to levels of greater consciousness by certain acts or deeds or communions or causal get-togethers between the two groups of soul-brothers, even the fools became wise. Their capacities were enormous. It is always like that with hooligans. They have enormous potential. As long as a fool remains a hooligan he is not beaten. And such fools were these so far. Their cooler brothers of the night often stood in quiet reverence of this. The fools would yell together on their reserved big couch in the household of the cool brothers, "God Aorta Mine! God-Vein, Not all in Vain! Let Us Gather Wing to the Night Air!" The cooler brothers, dispersed around the large and comfortable and low-lit and high-windowed room, listened with smiles, and said often, so as to join the ritual, "Yes, let's do it!" Then they would all shake hands and wish each other goodnight, the hooligans transformed into serious and thinking men, which is the very rare way that fools have access to and are able see enough to grab hold of, but then when they do, they are never beaten again, even when they return to their rightful naughty and boisterous selves. And the cool brothers were transformed also, they all glowed with a discernable light, almost like light bulbs.

And so it was in the beginning. Before. Before Bartholomew had moved to the island to live with the old wooden doors at the lighthouse. The old colonial style wood and crannied salt window panes. Whole days there. Scaling down the dangerous cliffs to the sea. Then diving to die in the waters to climb back out of the crashing waves to be reborn for the day, the foam pouring into his mouth as he was pushed across the rocks with his body flailing across the corral so that he would bleed and for once bring the scent to the sea to the sea where it belonged where it could give life. Life to Piers, to Evan, to Jude, to the Colonel, to the mother of the steppes, to his Mama, to his Papa, to Trish, o but to Trish! To all of his Lambs. Whom he had shepparded while they had lived: he had never stopped blowing his conches down at them in their own sea on planet earth, to cool their burning minds and re-salvage each day the wreckage of their pure souls.

Now the places had changed. Only with his return they were long gone. 'I'm going down I'm going down like a monkey.' 'I'm going down I'm going down like a monkey.' 'I'm going down I'm going down like a monkey.' 'I'm going down I'm going down like a monkey.' Then he would get up and scale the cliffs and enter the hazardous waves and let his flesh be torn and his skull beaten and beaten and beaten. Then he'd again crawl back to his stone hut and lie on the tiles as the air cooled into the night and hope that the cockroaches would crawl into his nose and the seagulls rive at his body rive at his body let him just jss jst. 'I'm going down I'm going down like a monkey.' 'I'm going down I'm going down like a monkey.' 'I'm going down I'm going down like a monkey.' 'I'm going down I'm going down like a monkey.' Then again. And crawl back and lie on the tiles through the day and hope that the sun would char his body then high

winds come and break up the charred shape and scatter the black ash. And that the moon would open its clownish smiling mouth and suck the dust in and then use all its solar powers and blow it back out into the resins of the sea. Then he might be finished. Finished as far as a man can be finished. That should be enough for it, shouldn't it? And *if not*, then *what!* *Need he invoke Mars!* How many times did Lazarus die? Two. Two times. 'Enuf wasn't it? It was immaterial and he knew it. He was tied to the earth for this lifetime. He was doomed to make foot to the varnished sleek ruddy brown doors and windows of the lighthouse and stare through the paned glass wooden garments beautifully squared by colonial crannies and mixtures of sea and air and wind. His hair blew, and he held it back and looked at the ground. Then he put his head up, then lifted it up and looked at the sun. His eyes crinkled. He looked to the side of the sky where the sky animals come to meet. Then he just stood and stared out straight into the infinite horizontal blur of the sea. The sea was getting wasted that day, sea-acid hits, so it pulled its fucking ocean-arms up out of its old bowels and decapitated Triton and slammed sudden killer tsunamis that rained down on Bartholomew's wrinkling skin. His body seethed with ageing. He felt his face being torn apart: the man-ancient crinkles around his eyes turned black and his eyes froze to lime. *Why was this happening? Why was this happening again?* He stretched his arms out turning white, and said: "Damn You! May God Damn You!" Maggots burrowed violently into his forehead. While the evil god slaked the blood that poured out of his nose—he, Bartholomew, Bartholomew, he slunk to the Ground. Ground! *The Ground. The Ground*, Trish sighed again. *Again? Was she still around, he thought? Which lifetime was it?* Too late. *Barthy, The Ground! Leave it! Trish! Barthy, What has it ever done for you! You owe it nothing! Please Darling!* Ruminoid begged Cosmo to grant him mortality so that he could kill himself—he- could- not watch any more. But the light grabbed the wind with a hand and picked Bartholomew up and threw him down the cliff onto the wave-ravaged rocks with the very speed of its substance. His dead body was hurled from rock to rock. Fish scuttled after him in large schools and fought over the pieces of his flesh. Ruminoid was fried, his eyes died off last — shining in the dark rising rune as he crumbled to ash.

But a man is not meant to finish like that! Damn! Fuck-Damn! I just wanted to place this one call to him without killing him again. . . operator. (It was just this one call that I wanted, you understand. I could have told him that I've learned to take it well. He would have been protected by it. He'd still be alive. He'd never have to be resurrected again. Sweet succor to him, didn't you all know that? What is it with you anyway? Why are you so afraid of him? Be Afraid. Be Very Afraid Then. It's been your choice. You're marked like skin now.)

Stormbringer, marathon runner, you've got my heart. Run, run, 'till Eugene Onegin falls in love with your ancient demos. The lags were not only planned, they were the gifted mill-constants of your hard-legged final push to each amulet and bloodstone to out-case the laurel gentile schadenfreude. If this were not enough it would be hard. But it is enough. It is the thread. It's the immigrant loved for a moment. It's this. All of it. Stormbringer. Stormbringer.

HOMO DEI

The Bush Years

‘Far-flung (But Just a Poem)’

Far from, far flung, what chilling aspect snows your sanity?
Is there no extradition from your alien cell of self-declared Divinity?
Do you require exile to self-conjure your monstrous international recidivism?

Must we try you in a court of Godly sin?

For you are a bush, and bushes burn the terrain
and grow again,
not ever having really died —
And I for my part am not willing to let you retard the flesh of so many lives.
I would not even grant you the twig in your body after the act of cropping your
mind.

'Lines'

I can't seem to get the poem set. The sun does rise. Through the birch. Like a bakery full of promise.

The antithesis of a cropping of a mind —
ridden, ridden, all ridden.

As if prayer could help. Too complicated.

Ridden

with scurvy and the blood spots of lice.

Even in prison. Of course, especially in prison. Where we die. Where we live.

Slowly.

Or in the lightening flash moment and a blow to the head. Out, or down. Get up.

Or on the streets where the police
kill us.

Approximate shakes. Lines of sweat. I am in it for the long haul. There is no doubt about that.

It is the vernacular of fact.

And I don't even submit, I don't need to. All I need to do is breath—exist.

Let the lines be edgy and cracky.

It absolutely makes no difference.

You pay no price for being stark:

You converge with no other process.

At most, you are your own creative geometry.

Signs are different here, a broken bed.

You may hitch yourself up to its metal posts

and the only result will be that you smile

at the inconsequence.

I may just bother.

‘Dream of Day’

The lightening flash scurvy mass of tailwinds and sighs
Sends my heart racing for the comfort of your thighs.
The only major reaper of the length of the place
Is a little bastard man with red beady eyes
And a shotgun at his burly sallow side;
And I wonder if this is really the place to reside;
Here in this forsaken heaven of the skies
On the yellow mountain wind of the winter-thin birch
Such a calculation I cannot hide.
The winds here break fast on this mound milieu
Of red-written mats for the cramming to death
Of the mind’s angle faculties and the fanning to stealth
Of the dearth coitus of reality.
And so here’s a picture for you, Son of Man,
Take this to your hands and I want to hear you scream.
My dream, the dream of Day, is over and done’d in,
For the sallow ilk of your strange hymn
Is no longer a plane for me; I’m the saddest witch of your fantasy.

‘Death-gift’

If I could calculate a base
To trump a turnip
From the dead ground
In time of famine
And stay off the yellow wind
That seeks to blend our grace with dearth
I would turn the form of the Devil to ruin
And say
Come you back no more
And present myself with a death-gift; to preserve my store.

‘Ugly Form’

There was a kind of man that you hire
To prune your dreams
And bluntly speaking
He was a form out of Satan put into Man.
If I could calculate a base to trump a turnip
From the dead ground in time of famine
I could whip such a man by the mere thought of his ugly form.

‘Day-end’

In the red-rusted tin shed where I used to copy out
The demons of my doubt, there stands nothing now.
The ghost of the days passed me by and left not even a standing tilt
On which I could split the cases of my disappearing mind.
The demon hills around this layabout fortress stuck up on a never ending
precipice
Sign my person away; it’s a ‘day-end’ with my face gone grey with the winter
walnuts of sun
by which I stay.

‘War Alone’

He was war alone for the whole acre; a silent dream
That he could only measure by the stature of his manure.
This a man was he.
A labelled articulate beast for the manning of hell
And the sandstone haven was just a skip away. So said the deer
That when he was away a red wind blew and the powdery sky cooled
And that he was told of by the barren earth that was his
Nothing that he knew
And blind in this burned bright in night home
To the acre where he was master
And bitterly basterd’d to his Maker.

‘Mitle’

I burned a poem because it didn’t have a title, as if the mitle of bed-shakes and coffins

Were a trump to form itself. Which it is not.

Or as if Chaucer’s little had a say in the matter.

It was a very different kind of thing.

And so the cancer of the hand-shake, all ceremonial moot act and trace

With early morning pacts with the sky.

‘Still Begging’

If my love were a lever to grief and I had to beg the leaf for grace —

As I would —

I’d be paralyzed in the face, a stone ghost still begging.

‘My Daminy’

There’s the shed. There are the rocks. The birch.

I can’t make it swing. The sudden chime

Of my daminy.

‘So Who?’

Who’s begging now? No, it wouldn’t be you.

So who?

'Let's Get On'

Well, the goddamned racks, so intent.
We need a relent, a motted red surge
To bury easy friends.
I'm so careful. It's my tithe.
Have you a remedy? I don't need one.
I had a dream about a blood-stone.
Throttle you, it would. Said, it would.
Calm? Yes? That's good. Let's get on.

'O marn, cheram salm here no more. Ard'ed cry.'

The insult is there. The pills won't
help.

The sallow triumphant gland
has mesmerized the land.
For this there will be no return.
What's your name? Doesn't matter, we know what to do with you.

Written down,
Christ
No!

'Carry me away O Mammy. Eram lost in this land.'

The bitter taste of that moral-yellow
man.

'O Lover be true, what would Earnest say!'
'My Love, he would say that the Day is gone. I am so sorry to disappoint you.
I didn't want to.'

Married people in the land. Quaker roots, can't even withstand.

'O marn, cheram salm here no more. Ard'ed cry.'

‘Dead-eye’

Winter wine, September, well it's time go, I won't explain,
Treat me kind. I am, after all, I am, for the sundry of it, it, the familial it, the
gruesome it,
But I am, treat me kind, I can't explain, September wine.
O God if. O God if. Why won't you tell?
Am I a . . . Am I a . . . friend. . . to you? At all?

Treat me kind, September wine, bad winter tales.
And let loose your demons. Dead-eye.
True.
It's you. It's you. It's you.
Boo hoo?

‘The denigrated frame. Ailing junker ale.’
‘It was that, that was awoken.’
Signs are indeed different here, religious as all hell.
Don't look for a connection.

‘War looms, we groom’

The sallow triumphant gland has mesmerized the land.
War looms, we groom, remember this, soon enough.
Married people in the land. Quaker roots, can't even withstand.
Or can they can?

I had enough strength until a few minutes ago when I had a cigarette.
Coming to, banish your fear. Stand up against it.

‘The Pruner in the Oval Office’

There was a kind of man that you hire to prune your dreams
And bluntly speaking he was a form out of Satan put into man.
If I could calculate a base to trump a turnip from the dead ground in time of
war-famine
And stay off the yellow wind that seeks to blend our grace with dearth
I could whip such a man by the mere thought of his ugly form.

Thus, written, it is that that I have done.
I am peacefully malcontent, with this pruner, but I will not pay his rent.

'Let's Get On II'

The Pentagon:

'Well, the goddamned racks, so intent.

'We need a relent, a motted red surge

'To bury easy friends.'

The Lady in the East Wing:

'I'm so careful. It's my tithe.

'Have you a remedy? I don't need one.

And you will keep it to yourself.'

The Man in the West Wing:

'I had a dream about a blood-stone.

Throttle you, it would. Said, it would.'

'Calm? Yes? That's good. Let's get on.'

Was that the Pentagon?

‘In Norway’

I couldn't forge the list,
In Norway.
I couldn't bod the slippery trash,
In Norway.
I couldn't cash in,
In Norway.

But—well, there is
My Daminy and my Acre
Printed onto a different spot
In the world.

‘I say, friend, can you lend a hand.’
‘No! Christ No!’

I learned that I was a good torturer,
In Norway—
As my victims pulled
My fingernails out.

Just lend me an asymptotic
Boundary,
And I'll be fine!

We can start the Killing!
In Norway.

‘Coo’

I'm going to earth. No one can stop me.
I'm saving it all up. Do you wanna know how it's going to be?
Clean. So clean. Clean is it going to be.

With a weather cock up your ass. Grass and beans.

That's for you General. Can I preen you?
Gee. I'm so prude. I'm sorry. Preening helped?
‘Coo.’

I'm going to earth. No one can stop me.
And when I go, you'll come with me.

Every thought and thunder of you.

‘A Racked Divide’

And now I can contemplate the hill and wonder aloud
What the final price will be for my final shroud—cruel words,
An evil tongue, an empty purse—a racked Divide.

It was that that was never awoken. And here, this time,
There may be a connection.

Let’s let the stars reckon with this Devotion.

Twinkling, all alight, owning the night.

And here I degrade the substance, because I could give a damn.

‘When I am Christened, as I am often’

When I am Christened, as I am often, do I feel the tug of ultimate maturity?
Do I become ensconced?

Please note: I am not caged. It is liberation.

But the final stage does stress the curtains of its address and redress.
The cleric counting counts for less—and the mounting bridal esteem in death
Counts for more.

‘Germaine to the grassiest effort’

The winter in Vermont is the winter in Czech.

The liaison is linked by knots of rope: Suborned: ‘For Unlawful Carnal
Knowledge.’

No, you’re kidding, of course. ‘No.’

Startled?

‘Coo.’ Germaine to the grassiest effort:

The whole thing is so foxy quiet: Dirt, Diet.

Suborned: the prisoner’s political fallout and will.

MY LORD; MY LORD. . .

‘THESE [eksiz] REPRESENT ONLY FEARS’

“These [eksiz] represent only fears, my Lord,
These Black Knights which ride the light burden
Of your field-men gone sexual with [waiz].
Youth, my Lord, is a hard sounding falling
Dead on the floor, pathos and remonstrance
Debated for a war by thirty wary years,
Wearied, my Lord, by the heat and the cold,
The hunger, my Lord, the hunger stomach-wise.
Cogito ergo sum, my Lord, or some variation.

“What House, what Ennis, What Charles,
Is shorn off by your all-rounded command?”

“COGITO ERGO SUM, MY LORD, OR SOME VARIATION”

“My Lord, will you look into the teeth and jaw
Of the black sturgeon, of the carp
Which pulls at your thighs, of Woman (III)
Tearing at your genitals, hung brown,
Hung flesh and mud.

“Wherefore all abashment, your mind the wielder
Of Thoughts and Words,
Wherefrom the end will find your solitary?”

“MY LORD, WILL YOU BE A SLAVE TO THE SEASON OF HATE?”

“My Lord, will you be a slave to a bastardized environment,
To the season of hate, to the reasonings of asses and fools?

My Lord, if your feet did not stand, nothing would.
If your mind did not think, nullity and draught,
Overall would turn, like the tidal field in the night
Which went transformed into a landbound dustbowl
Of reprieve and shattered hymen. Don’t laugh it off.”

“TAKE, MY LORD, THE INJURIOUS PROPOSITION”

“Take, my Lord, the injurious proposition,
A rude and private thought, and a fear,
Which, by virtue of being a fear,
Slaughters everything around it,
And there, my Lord, you have a Euphemism.

My Lord, I have heard that your wife
Is good to your back, to your Charles,
To your Ennis. Goodness, my Lord.

Your dreams are a bundle of straw,
Horse-drawn, alive; they are there
To tell your life like raw fish.

Judge better insanity naked as a bush,
My Lord,
And for your field-men gone sexual
For the hymen of your youngest.

Gracious, like the Negro, my Lord,
Be you your test of your own moral meter
And your salt will be made on the sands
Of the Indian Ocean, where the All
Within your hands and wrists will
Judge h\Jew, h\Christian, and h\Muslim.

u i w/h, by all that sings, will be a constant. . .
Ennis, to harness, subject to none,
Private and rude objects, shut down,
The environments, all bastardized, shut down
At their first bounded sheath and covenant,
All moot sublime gone dead by your Will.”

“WHAT YOU COULD NOT STAND”

“My Lord, your mind performs,
 All-in, in sum,
 Ideological defense,
And the events
Of your genitaiac life,
 Are sturgeon-brown, but sea-rife
With salt made on the sands
 Of all oceans
 Known to man.

“And such was the first foresworn oath,
 That you could not stand;
My Lord, my Lord. . . “

I WAS IN AN ANCIENT POLISH GARDEN THIS AFTERNOON

I was in an ancient Polish garden this afternoon.
Two bears roamed, one jack-nailed and ruined
On the right of the face, red-eyed, disgraced
Something worse than the moon.
Some kilometers east, Demeter was in the woods,
Everywhere, seriatim from moss to rock, from rock to tree, tree to cloud,
White peeling bark of aspen piloted to silence.
Her brown contagion of fertility and goodness,
Her red and green sexual flair, strongly, all,
As a tautology, brown and yellow sphere.

Samson Agonistes

Samson Agonistes

Something has passed which shall not return (rare flowers)
(said with ceremonial perpetration and censure).
The old grind and physical aurora in redneck hills.

the river gone bend around the infinite reservoir:
now we are forced to shave our heads (voluntarily)
to show our defiance (to sweat it out, to pound the pavement,
to dig the holes), in order to bear
(tolerate) all possible pain
Inflicted by the universal State.
Tattoo my arm, or let me cut it symbolically myself (red,
healable gash, just to tell you something).
My scouting days are well passed, it was decades ago.
Samson Agonistes, perhaps in an England (America),
raising a fierce hand to suppress the Earth.
Literally a Law, as if to Declare a Dead Constellation,
or Blake's mythology (I picked poppies for Grandmother).
What incorruptible mind is incorruptible mind?
A pen is a pen is a pen—truly salutary and sanguine.
Can you tap-dance your way to millions? No I cannot.
But I can raise a Maoist harangue (and
hate myself for it, since it is evil). Judged, then.
Literally a tribute. Is that so? To whom?
To yor mouther you moutherfucker.
Notice the difference?
See my head shaved next week at the same time same poem,
the same equalized node of contrition.
Or perhaps you would like it to be expressed differently:
"Venture a highway in the suuuuunushine, where the days are longer,
nights are stronger than moooooonshine,
'Cause there's a free wind that's blowing . . ."

THE GREAT SOCIETY: Unexpurgated Grammar

I: Grandmother and Warden

Grandmother's drinking wards me off; like a failed hortense brokerage with a prostitute; I absorb the burden; of the drag toward bethlehem betrothed my life to this form of behavior. Age has left a stain on beauty, rack upon rack across the ages a pair of draft animals joined by the yoke. I cannot maintain the difference. There have been times when I thought my life was over. Fire is crucial for my survival. A migraine pounding in my head I ape citizenry, failing with messianic perfection. Love is a war for the loss of the other's sex. I have forgotten how to love, the power of my genitals stolen by a black god. Greek agriculture fascinates me, the mythic progeny of a people. I have collected enough incriminatory evidence for the establishment of a demotic tribunal. The world is a slaughterhouse. Modern warfare is a manifestation of the crass and the blind, a ritualization of vice and crime, of the thematic relations between the agents and the patients of the criminal act. Rebellion is an angel descending on Jacob's ladder, hogwild radical governing the antithesis between the oppressed and the oppressor. Orchids float down the bloody Blue Nile, burdened with the faults of fragility and nervous affectation. The people stand in a hexagon, robed, fixed in a state, watching their innocence bloom; the mud gushes curdley between their toes and the green reeds rub swaying against their legs. They are hungry for fish.

If this is the way the world ends then I want nothing to do with it. Kanis, cynic, mammon; glorified bastardy. War increases its spread in inverse ratio to the musilitorial genitive horsestall of ignorance. What can one dog do? I pay a price for love. Loss of sex, red cunt, brown shorelines. Red sky, hailing moon. Daughterly war for father's phalanx. It's all a jest. The ribs ache with white pain. Faith is under the left nipple, left opaque pierced by Luther's needle. The proper name is saturated with religion. The hypodermic needle lances my arm and the cross is failing in terms. Liars are the virus of sectarian malfeasance. The jester cries defense. Deaf ears ward off nothingness and the light bears the world. Germ warfare is the premise of modern civilization. The need to the death of monologue.

Womanly regard for cloth, destitute lying whore in bathtub, justified. Bloody navel bloody Nile. Worthy lover of the lover, she brought out my loneliness. My inhibitions are pale. Gogol said, "Beware of the past, it is an open wound." Demeter, like trees. I need to be with a woman. I remember checking her

underwear. I broke into the house. I stole the pills for her birth control. She laughed at me. It's all done with. The skin under my left nipple hurts. My will is good. I think of young Boris in *The Counterfeiters*. I have been in classrooms, up against blackboards. Desks make me feel sick. I prefer an old cardtable. Like a woman on all fours. Women will wash each other, men won't. The stigma of sex, the wielding of power. Schoenberg stated, "Mourning is the only reality."

The squalid *pathétique* of everyday existence, moneygrubbers and beggars, the blood on the pavement giving light to the necessity for clothing, the ignominy of nudity; nudity like the rotund presences of Cézanne's *Bathers*, impregnable idolaters of nature, indoctrinated by the landscape. Nature the whore drowned in the Seine. I am so poor I must use the razor on my face that my grandmother uses on her legs. I shifted my bed around today. It proved therapeutic. Repression is the norm, the legs of the bed spread like a woman's thighs, exhibiting the red chasm underneath. I must make a break soon. I cannot keep living off of my relatives. I want to travel south. I want to recuse myself. Ceremonial anticipation is a worthy inclination, and I anticipate the courtroom scene. I applaud certain types of psychopathic ingenuity, Gandhi's walk to the sea to make salt. "We are in control," he said. Plaudits rack upon rack across the ages a pair of draft animals joined by the yoke for the Mahatma.

When standing at the edge of the Grand Canyon, Khrushchev is said to have been asked what he thought of the scene before him. "Sex," he answered: "Sex." Soviet Premier lunging from his chest and belly: "Sex! Sex!" My grandparent's bedroom is on the opposite wall from mine. They can hear my singlebed creak. I can hear my mind churn. I live upstairs like a monk. I come downstairs for bread and water. I am Darwin. I love my paintings. I multiply the identities of my fatherfigure, and banish them. I am a centrist at heart. I pace like the little fucking genius that I am, up and down the hallway. I am naturally grandiose in my constructions. Mexico is such an allurements for me. I am nervous as hell. I have had a great desire for heroin. Nothing is accidental, although truth-functional logic states: $(TFTT)(P,Q)$, the propositional sign for the counterfactual conditional. I haven't had sex for years. Some people build their egos on death. I build mine on that which is beyond doubt and its hangup with that which is absolutely doubtful, a pair of draft animals hooked by a hook yielding privilege of each to each a share of the burden. The smell of the sweat under my arms is as certain as I can get of anything, and as certain as I want to get of anything.

"I can't sleep with you after you saying something like that," she said: "You're so morbid." I laughed and smoked a cigarette. The bed reeked of her juices. She dragged herself around on the bed like a dog with an itch on its ass. She was obviously in heat. She was a coy girl, a real little whore. I had one of my fits while halfasleep in bed the following morning and my body shook with spasms of contumacy, like stealing fire from heaven. "What's the matter," she said, panicked, waking me up, pushing at me. "You bitch," I pitched fiercely, waking up. I had been waiting for the music to come. "I'd be safer all alone," I thought to myself. She cried and wrapped herself up in the sheets.

I hate wrong numbers. Altering the course of your life like every other phone call, they are not justified. Like prostitution they are a necessary byproduct of the system as it stands. The wrong number is an institution just as much as the brothel. I read about a banker who drowned a prostitute in a bathtub. I keep coming back to the end, diary of the end.

"This is your official bath towel," my grandmother hissed at me. "It has been washed." It was covered with excess paint which came off when I dried my hands after washing off the paint which had clung to them after work in my studio. My dead studio. I have the desire, desideration. To let them see the squalid horror within themselves. I can imagine their screams. When my temper flairs I am sometimes beastly to those whom I love, although never physically violent. Pronouncements can bring on panic. It is only the negation which matters. It is the only alternative to washing another man. In the end one mourns.

I'm on my way out. All of these fuckers playing with my life. A bad night. They're forcing me out. Out into the night. If she fell down the stairs and cried I think I would feel sorry for her. Old and wounded alcoholic. But she's probably poisoned my food. Adulteresses borne out into the world. Nobody's in my fucking league. Psychopathic ingenuity. "I'm a neutral party," he said. "Lucky fucking you," I said. All women have it in them. "A friend of the Devil is a friend of mine."

I refused to wear a condom. She said, "Then you can't fuck me." "This never stopped you before," I said. "I've become moral," she said with a delightful laugh. "You're a whore," I said. She smiled lovingly and seductively, lowering her eyes, and slipped the condom over my erect penis. I came right then. "You beast," she said.

The potvase stood in the center of the room. It was filled with urine. I used it to urinate in at night because the bathroom was too far down the stairs. I awoke in the morning and raised myself up on the bed and saw the potvase. A metabolic exchange took place between my apprehension of the potvase and the potvase itself, flashing a terrifying taboo into my mind. I had to sublimate this reaction to keep myself breathing. Which is to say I thought of mercenaries.

Panic is the only form of honesty, although the worst. Mercy is the only form of panic. It is all horizontal, as with forethought without malice. My stomach aches with hunger. She had shingles on her back. Her breasts were exquisite, youthful and poignant. I sat naked on her nude back and dragged my body up and down it. After I came in five large gushes I rubbed the semen all over her

aching rashes. I was under no obligation. She cried to me, "You are a wonderful man." It was all very pure.

Fuck it, I sleep, no guilt, like the loser that I am. I am listening to Thelonious Monk. The syntax of these strange chords is like birth, warm and irresistible. Like an infant, without care I could be lost. During Christmas time I am really disposed to this. One Christmas eve, after everybody was asleep, I played one

of my compositions on the baby grand and my cousin said that it sounded like the Devil coming. That threw me into a panic. I resolved to take control of my mind, to sublimate the panic. I had no choice. I flew to Hilo, Hawaii and stayed for six months, swimming in the warm aquamarine waters everyday. Some friends of mine and my housemates had a thriving organic garden in a tropical pasture overlooking the blue ocean. While planting and doing the logic of harvesting I thought about the grammar and moods of the verb, particularly the subjunctive as it relates to the genitive. It was therapeutic in the Wittgensteinian vein. It was there that I meet Vanya, a young twenty year old from New Zealand who managed a youth hostel on the island. She had a friendly face and a very beautiful body. We became very good friends, just friends. I would go to her bed in the middle of the night when I was drunk and lost to the world, lost on an island in the dead of night in the middle of the pacific ocean, the dark air sultry and lurid on the crescent rim of the island which glowed at night with lights. I would complain to this young woman about my father, which was not unusual for a young man to do when feminine sympathy abounds. She would sleep with her arm over my chest, the sheets everywhere. Her bed was warm, large and clean. She lovingly put her hand over my halferect penis one time, showing regard and polite favor to my masculinity. She would often playfully accuse me of having several women on the island. I played along, leaving her constantly in mirthful doubt. In fact at this time in my life I had none. The opposite was true for her, of course. She complained that her boyfriend on the island, Tomas, would really just fuck around with her breasts like a boy when they made love. Therefore she agreed with me that he was childlike, which was my firm and cruel opinion.

Even the male breast is very sensitive. "Faith is under the left nipple." He wore dark glasses always, rounded around his temples the wide screens. He lectured on political science. He was sixtyyears old. He had a brilliant Japanese graduate student who was his lover. She was sweet. He was always somewhat cross. He kept the fingernails on his chess hand manicured, his other hand set in with filth, the two hands ferromagnetic between iron and manganese, between priest and cur, between probation officer and janitor. He was antireligious. He made no psychological transferences. I dread saying anything untrue about him.

I faced the riotpolice. I was in the frontline, sitting. The young officer in front of me looked down at me with hatred from behind his translucent faceshield. He was both intelligent and moronic in his obvious predisposition to rage. Mornings are pure depression. You should never be alone. If you are a coward you can afford to throw it all away. If you are not you are commanded by duty, listening for music with the third ear. "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." The fetal position is a good position, what is beautiful in song. I drive recklessly, an antidote. The whores must have helped this cop express his feelings, negating alexithymia. I'll never forgive him for that; reckless excuse. I can picture him torching the world.

"I wish you'd give me fair warning when you're going to change your personality," I said. But she did not do this, because of the manner in which she

had built her ego over the years. She called it "maturity as one faces reality." Like a mathematical formula. But she lived an abnormal life.

My mother has a friend who thinks she's the daughter of Howard Hughes. She calls herself "Dee Dee Hughes," and she is not unintelligent and she is quite an unusually clever business woman. But like the subjunctive verb form as it relates to the genitive, sarcasm is pure vulnerability, which was my express attitude toward this improbability. It could have been wrongdoing on my part therefore. The imperative vocabulary of computer applications is an interesting phenomenon, tapping into indicative datasets. Claudius to Hamlet: "Revenge this foul and most unnatural murder." Hamlet resorts to his instincts and his abilities, falling into the murderous backwaters of his knowledge, where premeditation lurks with priapic potential. Life is a maelstrom of agitated modalities.

I will often write a designatory word down to remind me of a sentence or a paragraph which I intend to write in the future. That it will fulfill its designation when I return to it is uncertain; I must rely on faith that it will until I confront it. Luther wrote, "Faith is under the left nipple." "Nipple" suffices to designate this sentence. Luther's psychology was borne out upon this earth for Islam, not Christianity, in my opinion. I can only have faith in this proposition, since all evidence points to the contrary. I read about a Muslim boy living in the United States as a U.S. citizen who sued his school district because it would not allow him to tote his dagger; for it was said (he said) to be a symbol of his submission to God's will, something which he was not willing to forsake. "O God," Luther is said to have cried in a fit of frenzy and rage as a young man, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" He felt the burden of the horse, the bear, the pig, the Christ, and had sublimated at the borderline, not knowing the reconciliation of action and faith (mistaking virtue for the vertical, thrown by the other), which he was later to affirm with more strength than any other human being ever had or ever would, except perhaps Mohammed. He was caught by something analogous to the Muller-Lyer illusion, except that he did not recognize, as with those exposed the Muller-Lyer illusion, that he was under an illusion. This cry of rage was like a designation predicated on the fulfillment of its designatory force in the future, in manhood. This is too messianic, which is itself open to the full cycle of analysis.

When I was a child I saw this movie on TV. A man in the theatre goes to the bathroom and climbs into the ventilation hole on the ceiling. He comes out in the back alley and drives to a place in the woods where a van is parked. A man and a woman are in the heights of their lovemaking in the van. The man slaughters them both. He drives back to the theatre and reenters through the ventilation stalls into the bathroom. He returns to his seat. He has an alibi with the ticket exchanger and in the others who saw him at the theatre. Seeing this as a child, I was upset.

The three of us sat in a hippie getout food joint in the moist green hills of the island of Hawaii. The girl, who was around thirtyfive and had been on the island for eleven years and who I was meeting for the first time, commissioned

us to a prayer. We were all to hold hands (her boyfriend, she told us, had a spiritchanneler who guided him, named Jason); I looked down at the carved table and refused to lift my arms. She looked at me and said, "Is he dense?" "He is," my incredibly stupid housemate said with malicious and insecure glee (I habitually intimidated him). I became infuriated. They all agreed that I had ruined the "scene." I hated that woman. The desperation of my anger could have led me to kill her. So God is sublimated ego, and God in hell this desperate unfocused ritual that this gross woman was trying to initiate and impose. I find working in freedom with omnivorous appetite incredibly therapeutic, energetically cleaning your own toiletbowel with swift manic verve, like sucking just below your wife's teats as she cradles your head and silkily brushes your genitals with her fingers: Omicron to Ω, sprite, Spartan pixie, placebo [<L., I shall please>] as to humor a patient, haphazard nomic: Kurt Kobain wrote, "I kill you I'm not coming back" after asserting in his lyric that he had found God.

My grandfather said with subdued venom, "He's either been shot up in a war or he's on drugs." Wittgenstein continually said that he was "thwarted by a kind of Weltanschauung." He was never able to say, "I spent 5362 nights with a sick woman," requiring the institution of prostitution to come to his aid. Like my grandfather, he was homophobic to a diabolical degree. He believed that all homosexuals should be locked up, as I recall, or even executed, although of the latter I am not certain. This despite the fact that he dropped out for some fifteen years and wrote a book on Hungarian grammar. But Wittgenstein was thoroughly f#!#ed up. Why will I make myself a pathological liar when I repeat after him from Goethe, "Im Anfang war die Tat." But I do this for a reason, for not discounting the fact that he was a Jew, I will let the mechanism of suggestion designate my own three sixteenths, and there was then Albert Speer. In German: "calling on facts in act and deed."

So we operate deontically on women. An old Jew clothcutter who had been chased by Nazis and witnessed pogroms might say that he was happy in the fact that he had his craft and a beautiful woman to look at, old though she may be. A young WASP male might watch his wife's stomach blooming like white elephants, agitating his psychological carbon. For instance, to negate this, to make it known that I am solving with the ensconcements of grammar. Consider, the goodness of grammatical universals, it should be the case that when J.L. said to the arsonist (who was going to torch J.L.'s factory so J.L. could collect on the insurance), "If anything goes wrong, you never saw Louis with us," he should have known that, everything else being necessary in the perverse assumption of de facto relations in eventchains, he might, considering the cause and effect linkages of eventchains, be causing something to go wrong, simply by saying that. There are good rules for this. It is the enduring dilemma which makes me wary of the safety valve which certain human beings have for confidential release. But this is truthfully what makes everyday a nice day for a white wedding. Such is the perverse assumption of de facto relations in eventchains, considering the cause and effect linkages in eventchains, deriving a sublimation which is the constitutive fault in the psychological carbon of human beings, which ontogenetically necessitated the survival functor, which drives the social

contract. No, really. I would have to be truthful with my wife and say to her, "You must understand, it's as if I'm a vehicle," with confidence in the fact that our marriage had retained her propensity for confidential release in a special way when it came to me, her husband, such that one of the outgrowths of this was that it was me for whom she made love and for whom her body was lubricated by her natural passions. Somehow I am beginning to make reference, all the time losing the naiveté of religion. I have done something ancient and tribal: I have gone full circle. Don't misjudge me when I say that I love eliciting Germanic responses from my grandfather, who speaks fluent German. You must understand, it was his Will which initiated the chaintranslation of genes which has led to my being. And here I make a mistake which I cannot correct without suffering a messianic migraine, which, thank the heavens, I am not going to do. Exasperated by the need to urinate, I lift my head and sigh heavily with relief as I urinate into the can, as if after Kazantzakis's interpretation of Messiah, I chose (because, by tautology, I could) to marry and father children and die a man on the earth and halt the onslaught of the oncoming viability of an ancient prophesy. So you can say whatever you want to say, it is all universal and good. For instance, there is no reason why Lenin shouldn't have said, "The capitalists will supply us with the rope with which we will hang them." His brain hemorrhaged, bringing to a halt the Christian roots of his messianicism. I tell you truthfully, my nose just began to bleed, and I am reminded of Alexander's unusually mature fury when his father declared to him that he (his father the Czar of Russia) had abdicated, halting the dynasty, hemophiliac at its slaughterhouse termination, foreclosing on the dynastic future, anticipating the episodic pain of the Sickle, as with sickle cell anemia, another hereditary blood disease resulting in, among other things, leg ulcers. But disease brings on maturity and stubborn resistance, as seen in men like Solzhenitsyn. But in killing the royal family the Bolsheviks did nothing more than what was necessary to the survival of their regime, eliminating the need for excuses, where a plea for them was in order, so that today, misogyny is an empty concept. O God how I love the female voice, voice and cunt taken together, thank the heavens. My body is warm with happiness and felicity when moving toward orgasm, wife and world.

The veteran in prison then: the predication $f(\text{prison, war})$ being the requirement for the truest form of empathy, flashing scenery and blood and kinship and brotherhood. But if a veteran goes to prison, he is debauched and may become diabolical. With this logic, the whole point is that it is impossible for a veteran who goes to prison to go back to war, unless, perhaps, he is married while in prison and divorces while in prison without an interruption in his term, willing the whole thing through formal documents.

I once saw a crippled young lady, who had a severe twist of leg and hip in her walk, but who was the epitome of Joycean beauty, a venerable Venus. I would have loved to make love to her. I later learned that her teenage husband, years from the time I had seen her, had brutalized her, from which her injuries resulted, and was now spending time in prison. He was said to enjoy and passively receive his enemas, this emotion his first step toward civil disobedience.

You never ultimately lose a prejudice, just as obsession for a certain woman never quite ceases. Prediction is not difficult given a background record (where borderline sublimation is the rule determining the interpretation of events), unless in the rare event ($x = df\ 0x.$), generating additively the grammar of the case, one has fully sublimated. I guess I am reminded of the Oedipus complex, ordinal and oath. Just as Oedipus gouged his eyes out, so I do my rattling dance pulling at my cock in front of the fulllength mirror, screaming, "Jetzt haben wir Ordnung!" I am a Scorpio, give me a rubdown, I have been secularized by third degree burns. "Tin soldiers and Nixon's coming, we're finally on our own. This summer I hear the drumming, four dead in Ohio." Nixon's farewell talk to his staff is the most human thing I've ever seen on an audiovisual record, a record we will pass on indubitably to posterity. Give me a rubdown, baby, and dress me up like J. Edgar Hoover in drags. You play Bobby Kennedy. And you, Charlene, you play Hoffa, ya, you know, Jimmy Hoffa.

The old Jew said, "I've smoked for so many years that when I die they'll want to bury me because I stink." My grandmother, AngloSaxon, a persecuted smoker, heard this, and it was my fault that she heard it. I do not know what effect it had on her, if any. Perhaps it produced a revolution in her, or perhaps a temporary annihilation, carrying a burden no wholly undifferent from the onus of a personal Nagasaki, if such a thing is possible. Oppenheimer, a smoker, after we dropped the bombs, wondered aloud on the television screen if we were any longer human. I must believe that he meant this also from a certain scientific point of view. I must admit that I make a psychological transference to him as I watch his recorded image speaking those words on the television, relativity of confidential release notwithstanding hysteria.

"Eat your dinner eat your pork and beans I eat more chicken any man ever seen, I'm your back door man." Joe Christmas was a backdoor man, masticating in black silence. It is one's duty to at minimum try to understand. I said to the Judge, "I was under a miscomprehension as to what was going on." I watched the young man in front of the Judge, and saw through the relativity of empathy that this young man wanted to purge debt, looking subconsciously to move toward oath, to sit where the Judge sat, his survival functor functioning in its natural habitat. Before, as we were waiting for the Judge to come into the courtroom from his chambers, I was in the grasp of my own participation in ceremonial anticipation, a formal concept applicable over a wide range of human activities and functions, inculcating in me the impulse toward anal retention, future of position of power and expression of stance and declaration of prerogations.

She had tremendous sexappeal. Her short body filled out like a bottle, her little womanly breasts cupped like kumquats, sour pulp and sweet rind. Her nearly olive breasts gave sexual credence to her AngloSaxon features. Her nose was pug and beautiful, her lips small and pugnacious. Her cunt reminded one of the brownness of sex. She wore open dresses, letting the breezes explore her femininity. She would whine in a delightfully highlow huskyclear tone when she gyrated in the sexual act. She liked to be on top, except at the point of orgasm when she liked her lover to pull her body down to his—so that her anus was in

the air—and roll over on top of her, pinning himself into her with ultimate clasp and loveembrace. She came off like an adorable little pugilist, like psalm.

I wondered what the odds were. Was there a reason to convert to Islam, a truly moral and horizontal faith, historically purged of the decadent pronouncements of a psychopath? But it is still true that I need to put on my right shoe before my left. It is all as a man you can do to look in the mirror, questioning the status of your minority-participation against your endemic will to power. I suppose psychoactive drugs and stimulants empower the agent ambiguously. You will see young people embracing neurosis as an alternative state of being. Continually undermined, they will intentionally break themselves down; their better angels, c'mon, get real, they've got 'em, but give 'em a break. Or one day they'll break you.

Wasted if she was bedsick. Bludgeoned to death, hands tied to the bed, bloody. She was carnally engrossed (pregnant) for several minutes before she expired. His honorsystem was intact, he said. He just wanted to talk before he died. He said that he had gained the capacity to feel compassion for his victims and that he was not afraid to die. But he would say to his imaginary lover, "I wish I could always be inside of you." His belief that neurosis is female prompted him in the first place, he said. He was sorry for it now, sorry that his beliefsystem had been such as it was, but said with a certain sorrow and a certain resolve that nothing could bring her back.

Wittgenstein believed that Russell's "Marriage and Morals" would do more harm than good. In fact he detested it. And in Hemingway what we see is the metabolic exchange between the object and its function. This is the activity to which, in the act of writing, Hemingway reacted. And "Caucasian" is a sensitized adjective. And I need a San Francisco phone book.

My grandmother had shingles on her back. I was rubbing lotion in it and I accidentally touched her breast. It was strange. One time I fucked a girl. I did not know she was dripping gonorrhea. She told me not to "add childish detail" to my lovemaking. So I decided to communicate to her (fuck her) in a more conservative and unassuming way. I ended up selfquarantined in my bedroom and committing myself to phonesex. Such is my morality, a quality as sacred and degenerate as the grave.

Criminals love their bodies. I state that as a law of nature. And my hand smells something like that law since I dipped it in cunt this morning. (Note: The Germans will say, "Das ist die Gesetz.") These gross generalized statements and pronouncements our society is wont to make. So as with the tactics of combinatorial chess, I join satire with truth. I don't mean to be rude, but this isn't the age of Fitzgerald, nor of Redford and Newman, Sundance and Katherine, so assume the rest for yourself.

My habits are responsible for the course my life has taken. There is nothing more grammatically demonstrative than that. In the equation $y = f(x)$, the term f stands

for the process by which x changes y . Convention, as with one of its coefficients, ceremonial anticipation (resulting in anal retention), is heavy with weight, in such a way that some people need their egos to be tied to an institution, *ex nihilo* fit. People were terrified of the English philosopher J.L. Austin; he recognized that the lexicon was the dictionary, and conversely, whereby this idiosyncratic combination of simplicity and sophistication lent him undeniable power and subtle but not unassuming eminence. Notwithstanding, Gandhi was without a doubt a highly sublimated psychopath. As a boy, he admitted, he could not memorize nor comprehend his multiplication tables. Ted Bundy was a supremely intelligent sociopath who had a tremendous bond to his mother. And, yes, the semantics of the preposition was the modality by which his disorder could have been purged of its diabolical manifestations. There seemed to be no vestiges for him, and only vestiges.

My grandfather stares at the TV and says that "this program will give you an idea of how the black man thinks." After listening to a group of black people argue and sling words back and forth over the effects of drug-dealing in the black community and other issues of importance, my grandfather says to me, "that's the niggars for you, they'll never change." So that one understands Malcolm X's message. This is meant to be purely suggestive, as with the analytical ingredients of hypnosis. What we strive for is a horizontal meter, religious and moral. The vertical will only kill what is good and universal. The horizontal, like face and dear cunt taken together, admits no compromise and warrants mastery of the self.

"Excuse me," I said. I was walking on the sidewalk along People's Park in Berkeley, California. I said to the channel 2 cameraman, "What's going on here?" He told me that there had been a bunch of FBI undercover agents following the routes of the crack-dealers and that they had cracked down today and made the bust. That part of Bowditch which is parallel and adjunct to the park was barricaded off and a large police bus stood within this zone as "command headquarters." I thanked the cameraman. I then asked a black man with a slight flush of grey in his beard sitting on a bench on the sidewalk what was going on. He smiled and hazily muttered, "Guess they're comin' down again." "What do you mean?" I asked. "Police, the park," he said. This is simply a report, unanalyzed.

Shared technology is like a shared panacea. And they say that when a close relative dies it is often a relief to family members. Such a relief is like an interpretation of the death, where interpretation is more valid than and superior to any agenda planned as a blueprint for behavior on the death, form following function, Falling Water, Frank Lloyd Wright.

Eva Braun allowed herself to be psychosexually molested, aiding Hitler in his permanent revolutionization of the Will. In 1938 my grandfather went to visit his aunt (his mother's sister) in Germany. My grandfather prophetically warned her that Hitler would bring her country into war. "Ach niemahls," she said. "Er war ein Soldat in den ersten Weltkrieg. Wie schrecklich ein Krieg ist, er würde uns nie ins Krieg bringen." My grandfather just softly smiled. And my

grandfather's aunt went on: "Jetzt haben wir ordnung." As to Hitler: "Er ist ein Christ." In 1966 my grandparents returned to Hamburg to visit my aunt (she had survived the terrible bombings and postwar deprivations which that city had undergone). The first thing she said to my grandfather was, "Du hast recht gehabt."

My grandfather is going through his second childhood. I have confirmed this with my grandmother. He is literally driving her up the wall. He is an intelligent man, a Stanford graduate and former engineer for the city of Berkeley. But his recent fusion of childhood antics and blatant and dangerous racism (he is obsessed with "the blacks") distinguishes his potential for a stay in purgatory. My brilliant and unhappy grandmother thinks that Kevorkian is right. I can empathize with that belief, since as with my grandmother my confidence was once undermined (by a bloodsucker), resulting in the unbearable agitation of my nerves. I once went wild in this house (my grandparent's). I had been unnerved by a wrong number, which I could not bear because of my belief in the institutional malfeasance of the wrong number as social category, a sign, to me at least, that everything is a destruction of the subjunctive universality of the historical force, and simultaneously inseparable from it, so that I try at will to bring some event of value to follow on the wrong number. Wittgenstein has written on statements of knowledge, "There is something universal here, not just personal." It is aesthetically pleasing to speak tangentially of the fact that Franz Kline did some of his first black and white abstractions on ripped-out pages of his New York City phone book.

In Wittgenstein's speculation on the theoretical possibility that "any empirical proposition can be transformed into a postulate"—and then become "a norm of description" we are given for all time the perfect genitive right to ratiocinate as we are led to by our personal desiderative instincts. I find that physical labor induces some fundamental propositions to come to mind as regards one's place in society, or, more largely, the world. (Think of a woman chewing food for her baby.) Notice that this theoretical possibility regarding grammar attaches a moral code to our actions, since concomitantly we are not given the perfect right to act as we please and are led to by the desiderata of our instincts. The tension of Al Pacino's character in *Scarface* derives from a dangerous osmotic interchange between the perfect right to ratiocinate as we please and are led to by our instincts and the moral code which this perfect right attaches to our actions. This is likely the psychopathic tension which the Mahatma Gandhi had to fully sublimate. Consider his childmarriage, his suppression of his caste relationship with the untouchables living on his commune. He handled the buckets of feces and urine, a job normally reserved for the untouchables, and nearly broke his marriage by it. Consider the assassination of Martin Luther King, a man who had also to sublimate this osmotic interchange which was constitutive of his psychological background. Mankind will not tolerate such greatness, as a result of shallow principles, entities which are assumed without proof as being self-evident and generally accepted—postulates—bare and dangerous and ever on the verge of confronting what they prohibit and set limits on, of explosive and unregenerate psychopathy, as with my grandfather's unregenerate bouts of working binges,

consciously imposing guilt on all around him, desecrating the psychological carbon of our lives, what is universal and good, himself guilty, guilty of imposing localized caste-relations. My grandmother said, "If you're offering up prayers, you might offer up one for me." "I would," I said, "but I don't pray, I find it a bad habit." "That's too bad," she said. "Dear old persecutor," my grandmother calls my grandfather behind his back, and: "Suffering Jesus." My grandmother is an alcoholic, and raves in silence when she is drunk. "I hate drunken women," my grandfather said.

In the San Juan Islands, alone on a beach surrounded by high rocks, gazing across the sea channel at the blue whitetopped Canadian Cascades, I lay naked, speculating on the future of the counterfactual engineering of behavior, and now I think of the therapeutic effects this could have on serial rapists, coordinating this with the thought that national homogeneity is the perfect sex, which coordination makes me a prisoner feeling guilty at telling my secrets to another prisoner. But to pull myself out of this, I will say that I think it is important that we engender in our offspring an appreciation of the *Iliad*, plain and simple.

I pulled the empty coffee cup to my mouth. My brain registered a smell which I could not identify, an identification I tried to effect at will. This is not unlike the fact that I often go to the dictionary for a word which I know but as to which I want to know the exact meaning. Such things are a true facet of my being. It is like testing an empirical proposition. But get this, once I have a place to hang my hat on, well, and when it comes to testing, well, it is not identical to but not unlike going through a ritual. Kurt Kobain could have said to everything there is a time but it doesn't really matter. Interpretation being superior to agenda, if so inspired, I would have to say to my interlocutor, " 'Roumanian' is another way of spelling 'Rumanian'." I can't survive such perfection. Consider, tentatively, Sade's F---combinations: $f(x)$, where x is a permanent and constantly accomplished sexual variable, x changing y —the sexual combination—under the sexual process f . Hoy! Hoy! Consider, sexuality is the permanent record of autodidacticism. Have you ever looked at a reproduction of Napoleon's signature? It's like a Chinese apparition, Sino. Blessed was Josephine in his bed, since, given the science of graphology, he certainly made love as he signed his name, ever varying in dimension and aspect but unchanging under Wittgenstein's sieve, like a black and white abstraction by Franz Kline. Or using predicate logic under the imperative: $F\text{---}!(x)$, to start things off. But this $F\text{---}!(x)$ on which x is predicated is an illthought perversion. You simply swoon into F---ing, and this is good; and this is universal. And now I make my statement: I want to F--- the ground, since there is none: *ex nihilo*, F---!, bastard! Colonialist persecutor! Do you conquer woman as you conquer mankind? Recognize your neurosis, bastard, feeding it with marginal and borderline sublimation, the dangerous form of the subliminal process, the "twisted root" which Kurtz held to be at the bottom of each man's psychology.

The survival functor must be especially strong in prostitutes, enduring depravity and destitution in small illit rooms on soiled mattresses, pandering to the sexual drives of men, coefficiently stressing the man's own survival

functor. Each draws on knowledge, activating, let us say, a network of epistemic systems which originate as feedback on the survival functor, where orgasm is entropy. So don't misjudge, don't you even dare. Men have hung themselves (ironically this is supposed to result in orgasm) (and they have hung others) for lack of such entropy, which is only a measuring stick on the ego's resources' ability to undergo spontaneous change: these resources, let us say, in totality the ego's predispositional ability to survive. Drive is a byproduct, merely an attempt to measure and gauge these resources. So don't misjudge, don't you even dare, when confronted with the reality of the acts and behavior of prostitution. Call off your dogs, recognize your neurosis, bastards, feeding it with borderline and marginal sublimation, because the prostitute does not achieve orgasm, but in its place receives money, a receiving which is another form of entropy. Would you starve her to death, would you with your puritanical subliminal hell-bent mind force on her an addiction to crackcocaine? Watch out if you do. With my words I command you to leave her alone, deriving deontic modality, obligations and prohibitions. Don't you dare misjudge.

Everything is grist for the mill. Take for example Malcolm X's injunction: "Never trust a man who doesn't wear a watch." His time was limited, for he knew that he was slated for assassination. He made use of his time. Consider his trip to the East. Wittgenstein legitimizes the fact that in life everything is grist for the mill in his primitivist conception of the language-game and its animal connection to thought and language. From the handling of a shotgun to facing Mecca, everything is of definite interest, everything yields possibility. My confessional sexuality, somehow, in the (prompted) acknowledgement, opens up further the doors for selfinvestigation. There is great agreement between this scurvygrist and what is real, my gums bleeding with passion, my weakness a superhuman strength, thinking of, thinking of. All of the people were gathered like cattle, all of them looking as if they all wished to fuck each other in the area between the genitals and the anus, a strange investigation in a new form of human effort and activity prompted by the survival functor, sublimating, understanding that when you sublimate you do not confront (you have surpassed it) and conversely when you confront you do not sublimate (you have not yet reached it). It's a 2-fisted game, where certain things correct naturally, glazing cretinism. Cézanne once said harshly to one of his models, "Does an apple move?" "O Felicia," I cry as I come, dying, lifted off the bed by the heavy water between and within us. Later on, still lounging in bed, I was trying to make a point which she (Felicia) refused to acknowledge. "Do you doubt me?" I asked. "No, but you. . ." "Then the question is worthless, let's fuck, let's flunk out, integrating our morals." Sarcastically she says (get this), "I thought you were a homo." Ignoring her and enjoying every minute of it, I begin to say, almost as if talking to myself, "Ya, right. Y'know, I've read that apes have been observed performing sodomy. If homosexuality is a physiological and biochemical thing, it would be interesting to see where these impulses break off in the specieschain. My guess is that it would break off with the mammals. Interesting." "I don't know if I want to do it with you again. The doctor at the clinic said I was healthy, and I don't want to die," she said. "Felicia," I said, "I've already explained it to you." "Alright, alright then," she said, "let's do it then," she said with sullen and spirituous

anticipation. She hated the word “fuck,” with which I tortured her foolish sense of decency. Dear Felicia, she thought syphilis was hereditary, and when I said certain strange things she wanted to know whether my father was a syphilitic. You see, she had heard that syphilis can “make people crazy,” as she expressed it. I had to explain to her that syphilis was a chronic infectious venereal disease caused by a certain microorganism called a spirochete (she winced at this word) which was transmitted through direct sexual contact only. “Then you musta got it from someone else,” she said with a worried and taunting smile, for she was not really stupid, just ignorant. I laughed and said, “But I’ve never done it with anyone but you.” “Liar,” she said. I said that I was going to start calling her Syphilis, to the protagonist of a 16th century poem, as I explained to her. She looked at me bemused and said like a little girl, “Yooooouuuuu’re Syphilis, you crazy.” Then we fucked. As usual, she was like Heavy Metal. God that girl was a good fuck, such a fine ass pussy cat.

I don’t necessarily contest Thomas Sowell’s findings on IQ in his book *Race and Culture*. But consider, do you think Sowell could bear to study the viability (viability adj. [*<*L.vita, Life] 1.sufficiently developed to live outside the uterus 2. workable [*viable* ideas]) and validity of IQ tests if he knew that his IQ was one point below average, or for that matter only average? I think not. At the bedrock of the personal intentionality of his study and far more important than his study and his findings, we see in it the manifestation of his survival functor seeking to sublimate. This, J.L. Austin in all probability would have said, successfully pleads excuse, where excuse is a byproduct of the functioning of the survival functor. It is as the man for whom it is impossible to go back to war if and only if he is already a veteran and after his first tour in ‘Nam went to prison for armed robbery, impossible unless, perhaps, he marries and divorces while in his second term in prison, willing it through formal documents. I want to say that Thomas Sowell’s study of IQ was then a form of masturbation, which is natural and therefore excusable, and which we should regard as such. But let’s be real, why not just come out with it, Tom, like Sandra Bernhardt in her Opus, *Excuses for Bad Behavior*. “Taking victim,” the little son of a bitch said, “L.A.’s gonna blow up again. Didn’t you say that at that party in Hollywood you went to last year, just after the riots, you met a young film director obsessed with dolphins and fanatically opposed to body piercing?”

Christina Flamingo had a pin which was surgically placed in her lower back when she was a child. Now an adolescent, she still walked with her buttocks thrust back as a result of the pin. But this girl was a sex-pot, very skanky. She was also a sexual fireball when it came to the fine and truly womanly development of her rather petit body and face, the likes of which I have not seen since, so that I would say to myself when I saw strutting, “Look at that little sex-tramp, that little whore, I’ll bet she squeals and sets her boyfriend off prematurely every time.” At the senior prom, it was rumored that she and her boyfriend painted the walls of their Hyatt Regency suite with the blood of her menstruation, an iconic and sick but revolutionary act. But for all of you wishing to misinterpret me, I say to you, Those who worship pain can kiss my ass.

"I cook it, you eat it, or you starve," my grandmother said. "I'm not cooking to order." I went upstairs and took off my belt and swung, cracking the air, thinking of all of the Desperately Seeking Susans in bed with their vibrators, the one with shingles, a professional ballet dancer, whom I was thinking of in particular, swinging her body around the San Francisco apartment like Isadora Duncan, abandoning her craft for a life on earth and a return to Eden, when she revolts and imagines a rapist pushing her head back and slashing her as he violates her with his deep and rabid penetration; I imagined her remembering her schooling, anachronistically befriending Joan of Arc, adjusting her body to the stern and arch positions of a Martha Graham or even a Nijinsky, calling, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?", yes, a woman messiah figure, iconoclast to the tokens of fabricated history.

If you learn a weapon, you will use it. This is a law. Consider a man facing capital punishment, he will, as with a group of people who wish to fuck each other in the area between the genitals and the anus and who therefore initiate a strange investigation of a new form of human effort and behavior, either sublimate, understanding that when he sublimates he does not confront (he has surpassed it), or he will not sublimate and instead will confront and be ignorant of the converse fact that when he confronts he does not sublimate (he has not yet reached it) and had he sublimated he would not confront nor need to. It's a 2-fisted game, where certain things correct naturally, glazing cretinism. If he confronts, the ignorance of the fact that he does not sublimate is the only thing that saves him, and this is sacrificial and seductive. He will be like a monkey holding a man's skull and wondering. Or better, it is a marriage prompted by accidental pregnancy, disowning and divorcing only in death.

The lovely beauty that she is, my highclass model cannot compare with this little teenager with brown sex selling me her body for love of country, ghostly prefiguring hallucination and death, God's fanatical embrace, definite miracles, aligned providences, aged harlots, freakish pimps, little black girl, homogenized, eating up the divine fault in our psychological carbon like caviar, sustained, delivered, shut out, murdered, given birth to, familyloved, familyabandoned, stupefied, apathetic, drowned, crossed, sucked, sucking, sucking, filtering like Wittgenstein's sieve, like a black and white abstraction by Franz Kline, deontic, lovely, soon hidden, soon forgotten, never forgotten by those who have climbed Jacob's ladder syncategorematic between my will and my snctor, 1 : 1 proportionately, sublimating the subconscious cognizance of the constitutive fault in my psychological carbon, myself a measure of my own entropy, where reference is to the self, as I make love to this creature, pouring all of my love into her, prefiguring her routine pregnancy test, infinite regress in situ, Fraulein, Ich wunsche Aufwiegelung, a formal caveat [Lat., Let him beware.] Consider a child panicstricken and heartbroken and struck to his soul by the sight of a small mouse caught bloodied and mangled in a mouse trap in the cupboard beneath the kitchen sink, and then you will understand. "O God." Reset your clocks. The good feeling of violence. Like sipping a dry martini. Who knows where the cure is.

He tried and convicted criminal 1987 lieutenant German Gestapo Butcher of Lyon for sadistic treatment of Jewish and French resistance. US Army assisted in his escape in Bolivia. France Judge and jury 340 people 1993 a conviction. Must I withdraw my animal instincts? I'd rather X, and then Y, metabolic with God, fucked, fallen into nihilation, reborn an Egyptian slave out of a state of ex nihilation..., my debt not purged, willing to take oath and usurp, caught in the cycle of obligation, of Giri, of On. "I could put you in custody," the Judge said to the female falling out of her shirt and with sex and youth and womanly regard, O save me from myself. It must be his religion—he must have crabs in his crotch, in his slumlord cornerbed. "Are you always detachable from facts like this?" she asked me. I said, "Leninism drives a holiday." She said, "Ya, but. . ." I said, "Don't argue." I told her I couldn't help it, that I associated everything with X, and then Y. "I'm gonna free your slaves tonight with a bomb," she said. "What bomb?" I said. "My sex," she said, "My sex, ever since you said I was homogenous with the world around me." I told her and I told her and I told her. And she said, "And if I can help it?" stroking my cheek. I told her in Israeli Jews recognize a Gentile a mile off. "I do it for love of country," I said. "You do it for love of me," she said. "I know," I said. "Wrong numbers though, you know," I said. "Aren't you glad I'm not a prostitute?" she said. "Sure," I said. "How about a double suicide?" I said. "No, honey, sex instead," she said. "I hate Jim Morrison," I said. "That's OK," she said stroking my cheek. "Kill me," I said. "Oh, baby, c'mon," she said, beginning to cry, her hands on my lap. "All for naught," I said. She cried onto my lap.

"That's the final final, as they say," the Judge said. God'm fucking nevus. Mercenaries are men and women who know they have everything to lose, and this knowledge sets them apart from the rest of the population. They have sublimated that part of their cognition which is, let us say, investigative. The rest of the population cuts out certain parts of reality as insidious; I would rather say Goddam than Holy Shit; I would rather listen to an aria than a preacher. Behold the onset of the Naturalman. My grandmother is suffering from macular degeneration, and so, what of it.

I will possibly contact Mikal Gilmore, the late Gary Gilmore's brother. He is available on America Online and CompuServe. He looks and sounds to be an intelligent man. There is a small book copyrighted and published in 1902 which my cousin keeps on the tub of the toilet in our bathroom. It is titled, "Card Tricks, How to do Them, and Sleight of Hand." To give the author credit, it was written by a one A. Roterberg, "Expert Card Manipulator." I divorce the presence of this book in my bathroom and in my life from all matters on which I wish to and on which I will speak, as the war veteran in his second term in prison, his first processed before his wartour, marries and divorces while in his second term in prison, willing the divorce through formal documents and legal representation.

I remember once as a student at Berkeley I was walking down Telegraph Avenue and I was really pissed off about something. As I was walking, a young kid about twenty sitting on the sidewalk and bearded, his clothed back against a shop wall, says, "Spare change, man." I said, "Fuck off." I hope to God I didn't ruin his life. A child of the apocalypse, he must have just sat there on the sunny pavement, not knowing what to do or say, if he thought about doing or saying something.

Another time, I was again really pissed off about something (I get pissed off), and I was walking up Bancroft, I challenged the strength of a newstand with the ultimate force of my arm and fist, of my fist as powered by my arm. Another student, what looked like a graduate student (you can always pick them out), a male, seeing me, said, "Christ."

"Won't you allow me to make love to you?" I said. "Yes, I will," she said. "Ah, that's good," I said. "Before we begin," I said, "consider, if you will, how the stains on a mattress are the record of a love life, and how a man who is a veteran of Vietnam, who went to prison for armed robbery or some such felony before his tour in 'Nam, is now in his second term in prison for armed robbery and dual assault, must marry and divorce while in prison, willing both through formal documents and legal representation, if he is to gain the knowledge which sets mercenaries apart from the rest of population, the knowledge that they have everything to lose, and that this is like a record of his complicated love for his country." "I understand," she said. "Do you understand that the stains on the mattress of a prostitute simply represent her different techniques, as adapted to the perversions of her clients?" "Of course," she said. "I'm a soldier of fortune," I said. "That's good," she said. "I want to be uncovered," I said. "That's OK," she said. "I want to impregnate you," I said. "I'll take out my diaphragm," she said. "No, I really want to," I said. "You will," she said. "It makes it so much more special," I said. "Yes," she said.

"Don't you want to be sure your investigation is complete? Do you want to leave any stones unturned and say to hell with social mores, lengthening? Don't you remember Jefferson, I swear you're a Jeffersonian. Haven't you sworn upon some alter of your own eternal hostility against tyranny over the mind of man? You could be to me as Benjamin Rush was to Jefferson, a mediator between my unhappiness and my will to survive? Or do you want me to fall into a fury and retire to my own handling of my deep unhappiness, my own Monticello, no one to mediate, setting in motion the bloody Nile which runs through my head?" "You're a jackal, but I love you," she said.

When a person dies or is killed a whole universe is destroyed, relative to the, let us say, syncategorematic expressions of the survival functor. Because several years ago I had a vision of the psychological fault in all men and it is only now that this notion which has been weighing on my mind for six years now is beginning to take form, logically. I understand the serial plots of criminals and find that abhorrence is an impossibility whereas horror is familiar and cogent. Yellow. Blue. Orange. Green. Ochre. I had a dream, and in it Kafka said: "We doth learn and forbear." And in the dream Freud took it up, as he always did. Just as there is no language before the syncategorematic expressions of the survival functor so there is no photon in the atom ahead of time, a mere analogy. But I think it has something to do with my obsession with conserving electricity by constantly checking the lightswitches around the house. My greatgrandfather on my grandmother's side was a literary man, who was plainly Victorian. He worked for Metropolitan Life as a cashmaster and was escorted once a week to the San Francisco Mint on foot by two uniformed guards toting

shotguns; he was a funny and eccentric man, educated at the University of California, and he loved this part of his job. From what I have learned of my greatgrandmother on my grandfather's side she was a frighteningly beautiful young Fraulein from Hamburg; she was married to her Danish husband (my grandfather's "Pop", a man of workethic and oath and silence and of sober drinking habits, brewing his own homebrew and distilling his grapewine into brandy taking a single chaser of beer to drown the aquavit guttural down his throat, I imagine tingeing his tongue and his gustatory glands with the licorice taste of anise seed, before breakfast), a small sexhot little pixie with the generous aptitude for spells of petit mal, lending her that soft brownness of sex which so attracts a man's genitals, small firm round brown breasts, sending blood into the fleshrod and floating balloons in the testicles, absolute gust of golden mean in bed and floating protestant sublimation of snctor into the universe, eggspem, grandfather. In an Edenic pasture in the lush hills of Hawaii my Asian friend and I set up and monitored the giant balloon into and out of which the AngloSaxon children of the island hopped, the two of us in charge (myself a self-appointed guardian, he a dutiful father in the Green community) of the airpump and the flap which gave way to entrance and exit, the antithesis of all gaunthabits of Germanic epilepsy. I cannot survive such perfection of allfacets of existence, an existential platform circulating inside of itself iconoclastically. I am reminded of Augustine's totem on Time: "If you do not ask me what it is, I know it; if you ask me what it is, I know it not," straining an ictus of inanition like a hepatica, plant of whitelavender flowers, hepatitis, biggened reddliver, ignorance like a chore to take on pilgrimage, halfbaked placenta of a prostitute: you're dead if the condom breaks. My greatgrandmother on my grandmother's side passed on to my grandmother her fine and trenchant intelligence.

My father had polio as a child. He was racked up on a bed which had wooden planks in place of a mattress for the protection of his spine. After his time in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot he came back to the States and started his own company for charter helicopter flights, Astrocopter. Flying two Bay Area businessmen to Nevada, the tailblade of his JetRanger malfunctioned and sent the craft into a tailspin. My father, an expert pilot (second in his graduating class in military flight training), managed to keep the craft horizontal as it fell up to a speed of approximately 190 miles per hour. Upon touchdown the craft exploded and sent all three men through the two inch thick windshield, all of them on fire, simply on fire. My father targeted his touchdown of the craft as close to a stream, which was, by almost miraculous fortune, near to the malfunctioning (and I intentionally order the last four phrases as I have), as possible and he was catapulted into the slowflowing water as they burned. He saw the other two men trying to crawl into the water as they burned. The doctors and flightparamedics said the only thing that saved my father's life was the slowflowing water of that stream. The other two men died en route to the burn clinic by helicopter. Another stroke of good fortune for my father was that a young man happened to be fishing in this out-of-the-way area in the Sierra foothills where the Ranger crashlanded. The boy ran five miles to retrieve help. I was in daycare when this happened, not more than eight years old; my younger brother Alastair was taken from the foster home to my grandparents' along with me. I was in my

father's custody at the time. I remember my grandmother coming to pick me up and take me from that bizarre place where the mother who ran the daycare out of her house had two strange adolescent sons who would play bizarre games with the children, with us. I remember visiting my father in the hospital. He and my mother had been divorced for some four years. She brought me to him and brought herself to him also, giving him a pack of spearmint gum. My father was in a body caste for a couple of years, having broken his back in several places; he lost part of his tongue and could not speak coherently for some time; he had third degree burns on over two thirds of his body, his face and head spared. He received a large sum of money in a suite against the mechanics and their union perhaps, I don't know. During his recuperation he lived in the upstairs loft of a church. Miraculously, during this period he finished his MBA at San Jose State University, having abandoned his pursuit of a degree in Engineering, of which he had completed a few years. My father and I do not see eye to eye. I remember a few years ago having lunch with him in Berkeley he told me of a "mystical experience" he had had when looking out at the ocean from a remote beach south of San Diego, the telling of which was good because he has such a hard time admitting the existence of the powerful fuel by which his emotions had determined and ruled and still were determining and ruling his carefully planned and executed life, accidents notwithstanding, for he is nothing if not military and therefore organized to an inappropriate level which is at all times appropriate; otherwise his recuperation would not have been possible. A few years ago I went through his old love letters to my mother when they were in their early twenties and one of them contained a poem he had written to and for her which described his joy at being at the beach with her on a sunny day and he "jumped into" her "laughing waters". My father now does consulting work and develops land and has a third child with his second wife; I do not doubt that she loves him, having been polioracked and burnt up, and even in her deep earnesty. When my father was a child and an adolescent he had to use the bathwater which was left over from his father's bath whenever he (my father) bathed. He had to share a bedroom with his sister (a rare beauty), his section separated by a single bedsheet hanging from the ceiling in the second bedroom of the twobedroom Oakland house. His sister, several years older than my father, became utterly lost to the world when her parents died several years ago. I know my father sends her money to her home in Tennessee, where she lives with her daughter, a graduate student, I am told, in molecular biology.

So with nothing else to say, let's take a dark look at the Birdman of Alcatraz.

Oakland, 1993

II: Sex, War, Language

Technology gives access to everything: Blitzkrieg, War, Sex, Language, here stroking the genitals as the horvert chore of the prostitute in war time yielding Battlehymn. Got a bladder problem. Never checked it out, but got it. Whenever I enter a public bathroom with bigenned redbladder it carries the anxious nervouosa of a young Hitler rebuffed by his schoolmaster, rather than falling reclusive corporal into frontrunner horizontal fraternity and brotherhood of war, pines passing, pinescents wafting in the hurried passing air, in the blackhaired nostrils, bleeding nose from the strain of the nihilated corpses glowing in the mud, the mud roads, the mud runnerpaths eluding the enemy in space and in time, in forests and hills and august fields, in august fields striving against Augustine's totem on Time, *If you ask me not what it is, I know it. If you ask me what it is, I know it not*, considering the monadic existence of the totality of survival functors and straining the epilepsy of of of Germanic feudal fiat, the syncategorematic complement expressions *fiat : light*, generating the cultural onset of monogamy. The Mormons are lawbreakers. Delmore Schwartz wrote, *And a moron is a man who believes in having too many wives*. When heterosexual male friends dance with each other they are expressing and acknowledging and in a sense testing the feminine aspect of their friendship. If in war they are separated in combat they will if surviving the war always know where to go back to and each find the other, which is remarkable. And if you are poor you can still tape things to your wall. You can also always read Robert Stroud's manuscript on the history of federal penitentiaries, if you can locate it. Or wash your hands for all I care;

Showing me the small oak which he wants and plans for us to cut down on the lower part of the property, my grandfather says with a certain frustrated demulcence clearly demarcating his ethical mood, *That one was a volunteer, I didn't plant it*. Ah, yes, my greatgrandmother's petit mal calling on the hosts of my spirit as I fall into seizures of contumacy and wardenhoard, my grandfather on the subliminal borderline of understanding Satyagraha, reactionary for the horvertbound protestant. FuckinA, man, FuckinA. I must fall into song. Demeter, like trees, eternal cycle of Satyagraha, of On horvert Giri, of petit mal in little German Hausfraus married to silent antigovernment Danes spawning morally complicated racists. My grandmother went to bed early this evening, plastered, and I am not afraid. Because pigs are intelligent animals I do not like to eat pork. In the First World War soldiers would at times raise their flags to a vertical haltchris from their horizontal trenches for a temporary truce in order to drag each others dead bodies from the other's territory and when this was done, straining the epilepsy of a heavily wrought fiat, they would recommence their warfare. I remember when I was twelve or thirteen my grandmother took me to army surplus and bought me the aircraft sports jacket I had wanted for

so long. I literally fell in love with that jacket, camouflage camphor army green, prefiguring my horizontal obsessions;

I said to the Devil, *Despite the forces of destiny I will not surrender and I will prevail, do you understand, there is not a doubt. Industrially, you've got the upper hand right now. But you're breaking. Do you get it? You're breaking.* He was stopped in his anal tracks and stood up and left his Chamber. I went and sat in his ashy Chair. A woman to her mate in the throes of lovemaking: *I will not let thee go except thou bless me.* My grandfather was influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright when he designed his house in the late '40s, form following function for my grandfather's extremely capable mathematical mind, in love with all arias, bored by the dramatic dialogue which generates. We took down the oak today in the most efficient way possible. Upon completion my grandfather said of the stump which was all that was left of the oak, *I'll give it an injection*, with all of the casual sense of purpose which is common to his nature. There is a book on my grandparent's bookshelf by a certain Frank G. Slaughter, entitled *The Sword and the Scalpel*. I've always got to think of Henry VIII when I notice this book, radical signs his second nature, his bane: he could not be converted. After finishing the work on the oak I said to my grandmother that my grandfather and I got along best when we were working together. She said, "Of course." "Labor is the basic thing of life," my grandfather said after I explained to him that Simone Weil believed that physical labor was the most endearing of human activities. As we set up this morning to cut down the oak I placed an orange pylon in the road to warn oncoming cars of our presence in the road. A lady walked by and said to me, "Did you put that cone there?" "Yes," I said, already knowing what to expect. "It shouldn't be there," she said. I said, "But you see, we're going to cut down this tree." She said, "Do you think the whole world is going to stop for you because of that cone?" I didn't answer but went on writing my plans for the day in my notebook in the front seat of our station wagon. I ignored her as she kept walking and attempting to talk to me in order to justify her feigned stance toward that cone. The point is that she was taking advantage of the vulnerability of a deinstitutionalized object, lending her own differential imposition on it, which is the essence of anarchy. She was nothing but an ugly motherburden to the world. I will not stand for the renunciation which is paired with the differential impositions placed on deinstitutionalized objects. And as I say, when my grandfather produced the plans and designs for the house in the late '40s he was under the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright, form following function, fff. My cousin is in the ER at Alta Bates right now for severe eye irritation to the point of unbearable pain; I drove him there. It is not an uninteresting fact that a person who has been ill and taken care of during his or her illness will relish the more the opportunity to care for someone else during their illness. There is a place in Havana called The Park of Remorse, where Cubans line up in an attempt to obtain exit visas to the United States. Life is complicated if you don't exercise the differential mechanism of your judgment, knowing where to deinstitutionalize and knowing where abide by custom. For instance this lamp in my room uses too much electricity to leave on when no one is in the room to benefit from it. The next phase in the historical dialectic will be either the thriving of freemarket economies and the human freedoms which are paired with this, both generated

on a deinstitutionalization of food, or a general plague of depravity and starvation and sanitary horror. A to-hire arsonist vows to himself that if anyone ever dies in one of his fires he will commit suicide. He says, *And I've never bothered my people, my kin*. It makes me wonder whether Robert Stroud's manuscript on the history of federal prisons was an attempt at a separate and cunning plea for his 1916 killing of a prison guard. I went today with my grandfather to see a certain Captain Eugene B. McDaniel of the US Navy give a talk on MIAs and POWs in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, and other parts of the world as dispersed out of Vietnam. After citing very viable evidence and making the statement that these men were living as we speak and that that was not a matter of conjecture, he pointed out that the lies the government has been telling the families on this issue were criminal, more criminal than doing nothing at all. He cited evidence of satellite photographs recording the identification numbers of individual soldiers, carved out in rice paddies, as in 25 27. These were declared "anomalies" by the state department in 1973, since it had recently become the policy of the US government that all POWs and MIAs were dead. This followed on Nixon's declaration, which in turn followed on the pressures he was feeling under Watergate. So we operate with our knowledge base such as it is and improve it and take action. I said to the Captain, "My Dad also flew in Vietnam, but he flew the Hugheys." "Really?" he said: "It was a helicopter war. Give him my regards." In his speech the Captain said, "Courage is not the absence of fear, but the presence of faith." He also did not rule out Divine Intervention as a means by which all POWs and MIAs would be brought home, and said that if he did rule this out he would not be here today giving this speech. So cycle and process take care of everything. Icons, unfortunate but necessary functions of the survival functor, force us into wars, force us to see each others faults and swear to our own perfection relative to the other's seen, though not observed, faults. My bed smells like a dog's been sleeping in it, such that, yes, such that we are right now in the throes of America's oral tradition, where profanity by perhaps some inverse relation increases language's florid and expressionistic potential, such that, yes, such that I have heard of a Brazilian Jujitsu master named Hoarse who weighs seventyfive pounds and who can take out anyone in a matter of seconds without drawing blood. He has been said to be truly a scientific man. Perhaps the universe began by separating icon from cycle, forcing fiat. What thou think, man? Ithink, Ithink, mon, symbiosis is good and full of light. Hoy to female lust! Hoy to male pain! That pylon was a deinstitutionalized object and was therefore not infallible as to its signaling capacity; My grandfather, when he is dressed in his work shoes and overalls, and is trimming the ivy on the lower part of the property at street level, is taken by passersby as "hired help" when he nods and mutters a friendly and unassuming greeting. That dirty little Hausfrau who questioned the viability of my pylon. My grandmother said that the world is run just by such Hausfraus. Lincoln's wife nagging him from satisfied country lawyer to his apotheosis at Gettysburg. Misogyny is founded on deinstitutionalized cadmium orange pylons, not preternatural, just as the existence of probation officers is not preternatural. It's not even 10 AM and I'm already exhausted by my focus on the world, behold light, β , β , β . If you are a virgin you are wise if you remain noncommittal on your virginity, , , . The whole thing is to go with what you got and don't strive to acquire what is beyond your natural and Godgifted

rhythm, typically American, , , . I'm choking, n, n, n. Good God just trust the analytical ingredients of what you see, and don't panic, where panic is the only form of honesty and mercy the only form of panic, just such that, just such that, an algorithm is the only thing that can save you, everything coming out just right, so that the easychair you buy from the Salvation Army is not fraught with curses, so that I stole, so that I stole, so that I stole my exgirlfriends semicidwaxed underpants from under her nose, my nose had rubbed into the fervent scents of her bushy sex so many times, I knew where the hidden key was, I took it and broke in, satisfied with adolescent death of adolescence God the pain. No, well, the algorithm is perhaps complicated untaught labor striving, striving, striving. Gonna get me a Geisha girl to sit on my phallus and part my hair and suck on my eyes, slight common indecency withstanding God's wrath, wishing my hair was black with a widow's peak instead of blond and receding, the modality of rehabilitation sending vaginal fluids into my seminal channel, aching, aching, burning in the phallus after deep intercourse, shallow, silky figurine gyrations, lovebouts, ferromagnetic between the terms iron and janitor, $S = I$ (the equation for the conservation of mass, the fundamental equation for every scientific theory: change in storage equals input minus output), for instance, I need someone to rave to and this is a behavioral counterfactual which I cannot banish despite my deep wish that my hair was black with a widow's peak and that iron is necessary for my survival and that the Negro janitor in elementary school was my best friend. Sometime listen to Van Morrison doing backup vocals. I swear on it, whatever and whenever there is anything worthy and good to swear on. In my two dictionaries nothing is mentioned as to iron's contribution as a vitamin substance to our biological system. I swear on it and this pisses me off. While vitamin D is used to treat rickets in children (children, mind you) vitamin K prevents hemorrhage. Of course I carry my dictionaries around with me in my butt, so I am allowed to discuss such institutionally supported anomalies, anticipating the deep ceremony of a reconstitution of their semantic frame within the dictionary, since how dare the lexicographers ferromagnetic between priests and curs depart from the lexicon which they are sworn to faithfully represent and which I am very anal about, where deep ceremony is the only thing which makes possible the representation of the lexicon in the dictionary and which lends such figurine beauty to the Geisha. It is my belief that only men who are ferromagnetic between priest and cur can fully understand Satyagraha, but only if they sublimate their preternatural ferromagneticism yielding and understanding of the finest human alloy, homogeneity of sex between all races. I feel it but am unable to purge my fascination with the diabolical, which may indeed be supportive of my feeling. I sigh direct relief to every human being, brotherhood fraternity warrelax, β , β , β . I feel it coming: I become beyond my Will and my body regresses to the roots of my Germanic feudal contusions and shakes in contumacious convulsions, straining the horizontal epilepsy of a base piece of proportionate light to its bastard fiat, my greatgrandmother's petit mal calling upon me from the grave. I strip and go to the bathroom and pull at my cock in front of the fulllength mirror and scream, "Jetzt haben wir Ordnung!" raging against everything and nothing and uncaring about this nonsensical fact of ex nihilation. I have great faith in lexicographers and so I defer to them, not withstanding their ferrogrammatic-magneticism between priest and cur,

Withstanding God's Wrath!

I am caught in a dilemma which I cannot afford to talk about, incentiveclause dictating like brown sex. It is bestial. I say to this little pimp, "Negate your cognizance, you little prick." My cousin said of Ena Olin as we watched her in *Romeo is Bleeding*, "I'd polish her cornhole all day." I said to him, off the wall, "Ya, well, prediction is epileptic. And I gotta lover. She's a derivative of the horizontal of male fraternity in war and predilection toward armsbearing." I imagined that if I had the opportunity to make a movie I would center it around the line, "You little fucking bitch liar, go back and kill that sonofabitch and get yourself sent to the electric chair before your next fuck with the warden." I want to say. . . to her: "I want to suck your mouth." Not imagining myself able to, I will imagine myself saying to her, "There is a counteropposition between desire to dance beautifully and my desire to grind my groin in the bicameral male objectivity of weightlifting equipment. And then the labyrinthine payoffs, from prostitute to the demented social worker, so that I partake in licit loathing, y'know." The other day I saw a pitiful specimen in the bathroom of the Commonwealth Club, a small dwarfed whitemale janitor scrubbing away slowly and rhythmicallyantirhythmically at the floor with the bestiality of wornoutpleasure and loathing and renunciation and apathy and incognizant ignorance himself and world. I will say: *Can you imagine having a menial job like that depending on it depending on it?*

"Whoever you shoot you might as well marry 'em 'cause you're tied to them for life": From *Romeo is Bleeding*. But ya, right, like Gary Gilmore marrying homosexually the Mormons he killed, seeing but not observing their snctors, caught in the race of his deadheat life with the state and its positive subspecies. I do not believe that kissing originated in the testing of one's potential mate's health; it was purely tactile pleasure of investigation ceremonially raised by mutual cognizance of mate upon mate to totem, adding a new need to the genitiliac life of the gene pool. "The Regents of The University of California on the nomination of the faculty of the College of Letters and Science have conferred upon William Alexander Patterson, Jr. the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English with all rights and privileges thereto pertaining given at Berkeley this twentysecond day of May in the year nineteen hundred and ninety-three." My name is William Alexander Patterson IV, dammit. So to fuck with bodypiercing. Harry Truman, mundane: "If you can't stand the heat get out of the kitchen." But where does that leave the antisublimants, the plebs? Well, warrant a plebiscite on kitchen appliances for crying out loud. I want to ask my grandfather if he knows any anecdotes which may have issued from the mouth of Herbert Hoover, with whom he (my grandfather) as an undergraduate played bridge at Stanford, but I don't want to interrupt him while he's psychopathically working around the property, hoarded lust of designate protestant Desiderata, Luther hung by the neck in the garage. And she's buying the stairway to heaven, manna, capitalist deinstitutionalization of food generating on the dialectic the licitation of our eternal obligation to free ourselves and our fellow man horizontal with sisterhood brotherhood health necessary armor. So I bought this old McGregor jacket tailored at 42 that was expensive in its day from the Salvation Army, recycling use and fashion. No, it was actually my father's. No, it was actually my grandfather's. No, it was actually my uncle's. I wear it now, that's all.

The criminals who find they are likeminded in rehabilitation will go on a killingspree to quoteunquote make a name for themselves. They will cross the country marking Xs to the coast where liability seizes them like a seizure, where the law seizes them like a seizure. They get the chair, hung up and emasculated by a raucous banishment to a hell of eternal opprobrium which will be on record. The new relationship between the language of science with the language of ordinary speech. The investigators in this new marriage say *father I have killed the eldest son of your eldest son.*

"If you're going to ask such crass questions then I'll give you just such vulgar answers," she said to the heathen questioning whether he should convert: for she said to him in response to his query: "the fuck, Jordon, put on your own condom." Teasing my grandfather (he was not aware of the fact that I was teasing him, such is my dire and irreverent and honest subterfuge), I said to him: "What do you think motivates these arsonists?" He said, "They go off and masturbate once the fire is going." His Germanic venom was complete as he said this, for after I asked him whether this was really so, whether they really went off and masturbated, he qualified his statement by saying: "They get a sexual arousal from it. That's what some of the experts say. Alot of screwballs out there." He was humbled but harsh, and there is no reason why anyone should beg him or command him or implore him to give excuse, to plead any potential defense on any potential case that could be generated from his statement and its qualification. My grandfather does not know that it is a well-known fact in the psychiatric community that all children have learned the basics of criminal behavior—violence, bribery and fraud—by the age of three, and that they know how to rationalize such behavior by the age of three and a half with truly lawyerly instincts and methods, methods and instincts which grow out of their observant prelatency prepubescent preritesofpassage little minds, a triumvirate which for adult criminals persists throughout a lifetime: hence their penchant to have their women shave their pubic areas such that it is not an impossibility that a great majority of adult criminals have at some point in their childhood experienced either their mother or some maternal figure talking to them as the mother or maternal figure sat on the stall urinating.

"No, I won't pledge, because I don't have a gut feeling about it," I said. "And add to this the fact that in reality no one owes you anything and so you (and that includes me) owe nothing to anyone. Take the anagram viturim; the power structures of any society are organized around the number three, such that you can take X, and then an Asiatic Y, and a free velicose variable V, and they will form the solution for the anagram autmretiv."

"It has something to do with the immigrant mentality and its relation to crime in a new land trying to found the principles of democracy from 1776 and earlier onward to somewhere around 1918, a year destined to kill the roads running skullward, american industry premeditating the profitkill of war, Ford the antisemite the most privileged citizen in the world Lindbergh antisemite (my greatgrandfather did the metal work for the chassis of the Spirit of St. Louis, and

I don't know [?] where this leads me [to?]) the oilbarons lewd crude benefactors of humanity, latent wardenhaste prefiguring Ted Bundy's prepositional needs: Freud too: for instance if you look at the Freud material without all of the categorization and instead like unto like to perhaps perhaps you may find much revealing material, just as categorial grammar represents the morbid presentiments of a moneyed class, whereas grammar is really man's animal ability to ratiocinate according to his instincts, instincts which include the learning by children of the fundamentals of criminal behavior by the age of three and developing the ability to rationalize this behavior by the age of three and a half, so that if they do not sublimate they will wreak havoc on the roses of their generation when they are grown, choosing with crass and degenerate complicity (it is sad) the anagrammatic viturim which will pave the road to this profane consummation of loyalty and betrayal."

"Mrs. P had no other peers than the police who had been interrogating her daily. She had witnessed a brutal murder. Her dreams sailed through the night like twin vessels recalling their ancient rape by a raucous sea. Mrs. P was the last of a dying breed who fall physically ill as a result of psychological trauma brought on when their husbands leave them for whorelike courtesans, Victorian in all essence of that deep ceremonial word. She was altogether differentiated from the modernday disposition to when ill plead money as an excuse for treatment, somehow difficult for me, a physician, to make sense of, like the delirious logic of eating a woman out, where each action receives exaggerated importance, where each pushing mouth action lies in the deep anguish of tempting syphilitic harm chancres or eternal damnation. For Mrs. P I apply myself to the perfection of the deftness of all possible configurations of fingers and hands and arms working together as a radical unit, thus arming them with the surgical radical as with a group of atoms that behave as a unit in a chemical reaction and stabilize only as a root to a compound, this radical element of armed surgery stabilizing in the Caesarean section which I must perform on her as she is in her ninth month and her hips are like a girl's for the rape she underwent by an intruder in her sleep. *War. . . language. . . sex* I say to myself as I hypnotically perform this surgical intrusion rooted by the saving of child and mother. As a man who has systematically watched my fellow human beings with, dare I say it, empathic courage, I believe that all criminals go through life making deep associations, where a murderer who sentenced to death might request that his execution be carried out by hanging, not just because that was how he had killed three of his victims, but because, derivatively, he associates the lifegiving properties of the umbilical cord with its potential to strangle the infant in childbirth. Such an association may inform his existence to the day of his death, unto his breach and breaching from this earth by choice. For everything revolves around ceremonies and the anticipation we have for them, as if we were trying to test our resistance to our innermost fears; this whole compound partakes of again that same delirious logic of eating a woman out (there is no reason why my profession should forbid me to use such expressions), where each mouth action receives exaggerated importance, where each pushing mouth action lies in the deep anguish of tempting syphilitic harm chancres or eternal damnation or, I find myself compelled to say, burial in the womb."

The man tortured by his internal rationalizations may take relief in the Koranic and scientific fact that each verb hosts all of his internal rationalizations at the moment he makes a judgment. Unwilling to any longer face the idea of negation, he may attempt instead to thwart certain ideas that might imply an internalization of criminality, his deepest fear. He may also take relief in positing a certain hypothesis: to determine where homosexual behavior breaks off in the speciespool and then spreading the hypothesis that a species has a setting of [+] or [-] as to homosexual behavior and then that it is this internal setting by which evolutionary coordination organizes itself. It is similar to his habit of trying to verify a proposition about someone he strives to empathically observe. It is his ambition (although he knows he is so far before his time it is disgusting) to verify genius according to empathic observation and upon verification send the genii into the demotic pools of powerstructures and cultivate their rise. Regressing without the aid of a formal caveat, he regresses to the proposition that without clothing there could be no human sexuality, falling back into the basegenerator of all his ideas and thus his tortured rationalizations, which is simply his predisposition for selfimposed thematic schizophrenia, opting instead for unintentional mourning, of grunting and growling as he passes through the morning mourning stages of imagining the fucking of a woman with a hot brown sex named Hortense, thwarting all ideas that might imply an internalization of criminality perhaps perhaps only if he knew the secret of the Stradivarius a deep ceremonial stratagem for the abnormally harmed, yes, Stradivari must have been abnormally harmed, whereby and whence his deepest production may have his "Messiah" Stradivari's tortured rationalizations whence his selfimposed thematic schizophrenia finding a subliminal solution in his anticipation of temporary reliefs and cancellations XXXXXXXX in his "Alard" YYYYYYYYYY. My signature has come of age like Napoleon's apparitional phallus in bed with Josephine, such that Mitterrand said that *Each man constructs himself, by his acts and also by his thoughts*. Everything you will encounter is pure genius; unhalting libido contra lackluster subliminal; trinity of masculine attributes are hair on the chest and good lateral muscles and the porous ability to grow a beard and then the man is a thinking body for a woman to adore with her body breasts hips thighs torso slit all to rube up against him with proud heartened passion she is his for enlightened humbled loving adoration; I forgive myself for saying I like to see bodybags coming home from war; she allows me to forgive myself for falsely asserting that I like to see bodybags coming back from war but she aids me, like an informal caveat, in my love for war;

"I spend half my life testing the resistance of tyranny," I said. "Look, it's nothing, save your grief for more serious things," she said: "I mean just think of the oddities of greatness in this existence of ours: Churchill while addressing parliament had a habit of pushing at his groin with his hands in his pockets. That's odd and marvelous. Just think." I replied: "But all of the time I force myself to confidently expect the perfection of my rationale regarding the resistance to tyranny. And when I err in this state of mind it is like waking someone up during a nightmare, where there is a said danger for such things. The odd thing, as you say the odd things of our existence, is that when I do err in this state of mind my

sexual abeyances flair in a rough and raucous kind of bestiality. I don't know. You know, what I really think of when this happens is Ceausescu and his wife swearing at the men who were about to execute them. The point is that I'm supremely rational, you know that. You know, I am looking for the first clue to my existence, the very first clue. And I'll be cycling this pursuit for the rest of my life. I began it in my childhood without even knowing it. And since I was a child I have demanded satisfaction. And, I know, I'm on the verge of raving to you now, but this demand for satisfaction which is part of me explains my interest in fiats, and hence executions. I don't expect anybody to understand." "I know," she said. Then I said, "But one thing that has always given my relief is the fact that when working on certain projects with my grandfather, who was always engineering something around the house, I, if he commissioned me to a certain task which I did not know about, which he did often, would explain to that I could not understand the machinations of what he wanted me to do unless he told what he was trying to do in this particular project. This is very basic, but its cogency often serves to rehabilitate my life."

"Don't shorten your time by rash acts," Conrad said. "I came here for the fatherly reunion of our children," Jordon replied. "How old are your girls now," Conrad asked matter of factly. "Sheila's fifteen now and Daphnie just turned fourteen," Jordon replied. "They're both menstrual," Conrad asked. "Yes," Jordon replied. "Did you bring condoms?" Conrad asked. "Not necessary," replied Jordon: "Their mother fit them up with diaphragms."

Oakland, 1993

15 YEARS AFTER THE
FIRST EPITAPH TO
'CALIFORNICATION':
POSTHUMOUS FINEX

15 YEARS AFTER THE FIRST EPITAPH TO 'CALIFORNICATION': POSTHUMOUS FINEX

At forty there was a realization of a change in me, a water-mark, with many deft petals and shells—and even mind-cones— . . . to parry my dragons and demons. A phase was introduced, a primer, like a poultice or a tea bag, that was following the rules of absorption and finishing. Finally, after two years, at the age of forty-two, the finishing had finished. Something could create by what it had only sensed a few years ago—now, a new era, where to all things important, you appoint disregard; where to all things in disregard, you appoint importance. In which the twigs of history no longer have to rely on heavy rainfalls to drive away the scarcity of water and cause the skies to grey, in order for history—the redeemingly garish twigs—to be accepted: that there might come an occasional success in something, and by that only enable you to believe in those twigs; when in everything else you are a failure. Now I love mortality. I await the Resurrection. I am really happy. I know that nothing more has to be done.

So I thought that I was finished. That I had reached the end. That I might not write. It's not true. I still have a lot to write, even if nothing more has to be done. For example—water. Then again, cigarette ash, and then again killing the cigarette; ah, then watching the water flow and anticipating the possibility of eternity. Well, I do go places: To quarries, I go to slaughterhouses, I go into fogs, I go into forests splayed with the day's light rendered eve-like by the rays—and yes, I can see the forest from the trees! I go to places that are still quiet. Places that bosses and the leading classes cannot use as doormats on which to wipe their unshod feet—they have no grace in their gait. Elsewheres though, they will, one day, go into those houses and burn. They will wipe their unshod feet everywhere. They will not stop. They will leave only ash. They actually believe that they can own ash.

'There is no escape from incarnation. . . Womb of the Lamb, Spoiler of the Ram.' David Jones had keen insights. The Lamb raises the dead and leaves behind the earth pristine incarnate as the womb it came out of. The Ram leaves ash. As Rome, it believes it can own ash. That's not as trivial as an unbeliever might think; or might not, after all. The world is still parrying its devices. Seemingly

small ineffective gestures, or pertinent ones like a wink. All while living under a final and extraordinary enhancement of the status quo. Well. Well.

There are matters to attend to however. I have attend to many things. Like, for example, hygiene. As the first man, and I. The New Adam brushing his teeth and scouring his crotch for twenty-first century scruff, on good mornings, or shall we say. . . fortunate mornings—scouring it for the croff of the cunt. Those are wondrous mornings, they have been since the First Adam. Though he may have been less fortunate when he woke up—but that’s history, we’ve got two thousand years now of freedom from that, thanks to the Θεοτόκος: Mary’s parturition of the Christ child, God-bearing Him, He the God-Man, God Become Man, the preface to the resurrection of all souls for all eternity, of all Dead from the beginning of time. I then, the New Adam, I must attend, to matters. As my Brother, as I. As Man in the compound meaning. We are all new Adams. Thanks to Mary’s parturition. How do we perform? That’s what I ask the woman on my fortunate mornings, as I go for the croff, then leave off of that nonsense of bathing, and return to get more smell and skin, to generate more croff, more mixing and grinding of skein and skin, grists off of our Mandala Wheel in the 69 ←See where she is? O yes then. O yes then. You’ve got the same stuff in your life. You understand. You’re Adam too; ah, Adam II too (you know, the second one, like me). That’s what happens when you turn forty-*two*. It’s a majority impulse then. That is to say, is the impulse of the Majority of Us Adams: The 69 Mandala, turning forever as the mill for the skeins of the two groins! That covers hygiene I think, one of the things I must attend to. The rest, the brushing of the teeth, the deodorant, it all follows from that easily. We understand. Hygiene is not less holy, it is just more gritty. While we’re on that, what would incarnation be without hygiene? Dirty. Without incarnation, whence hygiene? It would return to a high ideal, I am sure. But in who’s mind? That you will never know. Besides, it’s hypothetical, it’s not mysterious or grand or even real.

I must attend to reporting on world events as well. So: To fagot. To truss. To ease in. Well this is a hard one, it’s the mystical heart in the ancient Arthurian politics of this tabled and chaliced, chancre-d world: The flag-draped military-borne black coffins of the Polish President and his First Lady were interred in the ancient crypts of Poland’s great. They shall be there not far from the poets. It marks the end of something large, painful, vainglorious, idiotic, senile. It is the end to the fagotting of twentieth century man, a larger thing than what was ended, memory has its own distribution of volume for a given twig or rant or history-path. Anyway, the beginning and the end shall link and mate: 69, it’s a Mandala again. The World parrying forth, Θεοτόκος, the eternal parturition. That covers world events. I’m happy to be done with that—them. I don’t like world events. I don’t like any of them. But these were special. Imagine my stomach when they aren’t special but vulgar and on exhibition as man’s inhumanity to man just one more time, to be repeated tomorrow, next month, in five minutes or five seconds.

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I was in bed. Mama came to me. She said that everything would be fine. That I mustn't worry. That life can sometimes be difficult to understand. She said these things would be my certainties for my whole life. That I mustn't bemoan this, that I should do the very opposite. I wonder now where Mama came up with this perfect truth. I haven't bemoaned it. I've stayed faithful to Mama. I hardly ever worry about anything. When Joe the grocer sees me in the morning at his stall smiling at the bruises on the bad fruit in the bad fruit basket (free fruit) he shakes his head at me and says "James, what's the matter with you, boy?" Joe's Italian. I love him when he asks me that question. "I'm just admiring the best fruit in the district," I say to him. He scoffs and shakes his head and then he's got to laugh under his breath in a very controlled guffaw when he says "Have at it James, it's all yours if you want it. Rotten fruit. I wonder what so much of it must do to your stomach. . ." He trails off here or before this part depending on whether he's got to help a paying customer or not. My whole life I've wanted a way to express my impulses: those artistic, those social, those intellectual, those romantic, those passionate for an idea, those passionate for a woman, those passionate for nothing except for life meaning everything, not in compound but in possibility; and for death. Why have I not wished for a way to express my impulse to birth? There are people like Joe, and I have always had good relations with them. They are fond of me but they consider me ('consider' is an important word here for me and for them) an eccentric. Way-off kilter yet in the heart of the hearts, in the heart of their hearts they know that I am there in their hearts, as they do with all of those whom they don't consider eccentric, those friends, partners, co-workers (I hate that hyphenated junk-word), and everyone else in their lives. I personally think that men like Joe, who know me, keep an even more special place for me in their hearts than they do for any of the others I've mentioned.

So I continued walking home with my bag of rotten fruit. I will cut away the rotten sections and juice the lefts, or eat them in their immediate organic form as they are cut and shaped by the incisions to remove the bad. The bad is good for the bees. I throw it out window above the kitchen sink. I know one thing that I'm not: I'm no imposter. I don't pretend. Joe sees that, and after such a long time he even knows it, he's even consciously aware of it sometimes, and I know he reflects on it sometimes, lifting an eye-brow in curiosity as he piles the fruit or moves the stocks, then shakes it off with a shake of his head. OK, I don't know it. But it's imaginable. Not everything is simply imaginable that way. Everything is imaginable as a tautology but that's at the cosmic level of stating a fact of man's potential for a scientific and observable presence in the world. Impersonal. No this is different, it requires input from real experience. Imaginable that Kate has a mole on her buttocks because she's got a few dimpled crescent lovelies on her face and a few on her higher back end that I've espied when she's in her bathing suit. I haven't made Kate yet. But I can imagine her buttocks. I can even imagine it right up against my crotch, but that's a different matter. I'm so sorry for this rant. Bad for reader's health. Better not to read it then. It's just for me. Just for me to type and fuck around in, my own enormously tiny sandbox of fuck-ups, failures, non-events, pointless ejaculations doing nothing but turning the insides of vaginas into slippery paradises to enjoy for several extra moments or another run at it. I'm just a fuck-up, but not a pretender. Is there honor in

that? None. Absolutely none. I just means that I have a romantic disease for meaning, that I don't give a fuck-shit about the meaning of meaning. Really I don't though. There have been writers who have so outranked me that why should I waste my resources (those are mine, those resources belong to no one but me) on concurrence and competition or aspiration. You are born with what you've got, a hard drive and a hard-on. Some are just better with them than I. It's one of Mamas certainties. So I have no dying afflatuses in despairing stripped emotional elements. I have no meaning of meaning. No original, nothing to derive, just the flat continuance of the hard drive and the hard-on, neither of which I enjoy very much. Another of the certainties for the full total of my life. What can I say about my neighbors with some of the crap in mind? None of them have hard drives, but they all have hard-ons. Their women get squeezed, parted in the bio-mythic anticipation of parturition and turned into water slides at the onset of the insemination and at end with bearing that child. Derived? Perhaps. Perhaps not. It can be seen as a theological question. Which is where it should be anyway.

Attendances. Attendances. How full we are of them. The species must continue. Everything that is relevant must continue. Which means everything in disregard. I swear to God that when I was a child I could tell you twenty-five different ways to get to the river, all through bush and dry dust, horny-toads and snakes, lizards, each path so exciting in its own personality. And the gush of emotion that each one gave. Each a living sanctification of my desire, full full full in the chest with outrageous ecstasy for the world, for woman, for everything. When the wind blew it was incomparable, a purple ball in the night hammering away at me in the dust bowl to the river. Names, names, of what importance? No, it was the things, the objects, the animals, the geology, looking at them, feeling them. There were no names except for your special private objects of adoration, like the horny-toads, or the tadpoles at the muddy water at the banks of the river. A name was a game for adults and fools. Fools all of them. Not a wise one to one of them. Cynical and old now, I call them faggots. They are faggots, still fools, forever faggots, forever fools. Not homosexuals, not gays, not that: *faggots*, *heterosexual straight faggots*. A child, not knowing the concept of elimination as a political tool, to survive in that world of faggots was biting on a toxic acid all day every day and at night in the dreams. Enemies in black coats with hoods and fangs. So we learned all about enemies in our dreams. They reappeared in the day. Zombies in cars. Zombies with Pepsis. Zombies with Coke. Zombies with pot. Zombies copulating. Full of shit in their bowels and pumping at each other. Holding their sphincters tight just to be sure. Biological mutants. Ever should not have existed. Ever cloning. Ever impatient. Ever blind. Ever stupid. Ever trussing the other with witchcraft. Ever letting the kids watch. Ever demons. Ever evil. Cynical and old and wrinkled my teeth rotting from lack of dentistry, that's me. But not ever trussing the other with witchcraft. Occasionally evil, but never a demon. Never a demon. Never even sincerely evil. I lack that sincerity. Sincere evil. Sincerely Evil, Yours Truly, here's your charges and bill me once a month. My turn now, idiotas, humanoid spirochetes. My old cynical wrinkles and skull-looking rotting teeth will live on for ages and I shall be resurrected as Lazarus a million billion times while you fall once and then are submerged in

Hades one time only. You're not dead, you're living. I'm dead and living. I'm not a vampire. You're vampires. You have sucked so much of our blood to enhance your own vainglorious images of yourselves. But anemia? It never happened, we are flush, it's symbiotic with our rotten teeth and eternal resurrection and kill-smile that is interchangeable with a sad-smile, a why?-smile, a how-could-you?-smile. Your smile? A *whence*?-smile. I am so sorry. You were the American dream. That's what happens to (R)American dreams, throughout time, the ages, the only-partly contiguous eras, — your bane, you faggot sexual spastic (Zappa, citationed, an anomaly, how the hell the fuck did he come of you? He must have been a fucking alien, alien to combat and mock the vampires, he cut you up in pieces *he did he idiot*).

Attend! Attend! I must attend! I sound like Dickens! Great Expectations! Shall we bargain a Right? A Right to what? To Write! Let's bargain. You want to Bet? You *ARE* a fucking scoundrel! "She wants it up the ass, give it to her up the ass." Time's they'had-a-changed-a-uggg-Bob So You wanna Bet? Fine! Let's Bet then! Straight Flush! You look Anemic! O don't take it so hard: That's not like a good Vampire. Cheer up! Hey, they're playing Barry White! O Yeah, like Marvin, you didn't like him. Didn't carry enough venom is what I read. Well I still like Barry White.

The boys made it. They made it against the wishes and the expectations of 99% of humanity. Well I was a boy. No big deal. But just to relate an item, I just want to relate some items, I just want to relate an item. I used to listen to AC/DC: Dirty Deeds Dunderchiefs. I never knew what Dunderchiefs meant. And I still don't. Isn't that pretty pathetic for an intellectual fok like me? Probably. Be that as it may. Going back to the childhood, I love that phrase: Dun Der Chiefs. And I know that it was swimming in my mind in the brazen context of Piaget's theories, and beliefs, and convictions, about children, and what they do, and unfortunately what they represent, because when we represent we are returning to the adult world. Nonetheless, it was swirling in Piaget's orbit, against 99% of humanity's wishes, against very nearly 100% of all of our standard output standard fare Nobel academics and their nearly equal pure ilk. But I was a child once. And I remember the Dunderchiefs. Done Dirt Cheap.

*MY BELOVED
PARISHIONERS*

MY BELOVED PARISHIONERS

The television—an old blurred early color version—blared out the news. It did that every day. Today, David Brinkley announced that George Moscone and Harvey Milk had been shot. David Brinkley: “Milk was the first gay elected public official in the country.” None of this was conceivable. It was so far removed, like an undiscovered planet, from conceivability, that it simply wasn’t conceivable (I’m not going to apologize for my tautologies at this time in my life, I am forty and have traveled on every continent of the earth and am tired). The city’s policies were in absolute critical flux and the nation was watching. So, there was a surety signed and executed in the months and weeks before November 27, 1978. Diane Feinstein still has Dan White’s diaries, and I do not know why. It was ten years and two days to the day that I was born that these two officials were gunned down. At the same time the nation was watching the footage come in of the poisoned dead bodies of Jonestown, Guyana. The footage moved with the camera across the blinking color screen: It was like a weird result of a hail-storm of butchered limbs passing after the storm, bodies complete bodies simply because they were from San Francisco. All of it so fundamental now, having cropped my shy little subconscious just a bit more each time a new war was declared: On crime, on drugs, on teenage pregnancy, on guns, on HIV/AIDS, on terror. Fundamental to a shy child like me even today. Now that they’re gone . . . that is to say the people who understood it, my grandparents, who were both around forty on November 22, 1960, eighteen years earlier. . . now that . . . I mean, they understood and reviled the people of the Milk Dynasty who have been have been posting bond every day since then in the exhilaration of their successful subterfuge. Milk did not like the people whom my grandparents reviled then and he would not like them now. For reasons different from that of my grandparents, but for reasons the same.

I wonder now. I wonder if the divorce courts of those days were really worth it. I wonder what was in the bones of the judges. I wonder if they had bones. I wonder if The Left really knew what it was doing by that time. The emperor has no clothes. They lit up their dim minds and thought like agents of Mao; children turned into bats self-invigorated. The old parishioners of the two wars to end all wars, and then the new security State, saw through it. Perhaps that’s why they loved their grandchildren so much. I think they were afraid that we were already being taken for deer in a deer park and that the world would never let us go and look for the earth. I believe it was difficult for them to countenance it because

they knew that they would be dead before they could help, but I believe that they could deal with it fatalistically because of their particular existential slot in history, which was in deed penultimate. I was “Lex,” you see. Not “Alex,” LEX. It never wavered. Lex was taken to the family doctor to get stitches. Lex was driven to school and picked up from school. Lex was bought a bicycle for Christmas. Lex got to pick the tree and then decorate it. Lex got the new fishing reel and the new fishing rod. Lex got to go to get his new and long-awaited Navy Surplus Jacket where the smell of felting was new and pleasant in the warehouse. Lex got to go to the Sierras to fly-fish. Lex got to go shopping and got to talk to the lady cashiers. Lex got to go to the toy-and-sweets shop below Lucky and buy candy and talk to the old ladies who manned the shop. Lex got to go to half-moon bay and get artichokes and walk along the beach. Lex was taken to the Boy Scout paper drives and the Boy Scout meetings. Lex got to call to the children’s hospital to say hello to his volunteer grandmother. Lex received hugs, kisses, and “love-ya-babe’s.” Well, so much for that. It’s dirt in the water now. Memory is adequate but the senses are like most people: They never understand. At one moment these old parishioners were, at the next they were gone. It was not conceivable for me. It was not a planet that I wanted to acknowledge or discover.

But in the real world alcoholics turn on you. They hate their drudge world, you see. My grandmother was an alcoholic and had been, as she had been a smoker since she was sixteen. She was the most intelligent human being I have ever known: It is still like this and I think it always will be. But in the later years she became who she wasn’t: Mean (or perhaps who she was). My grandfather: “Suffering Jesus,” to her. “City Hall,” she called him. They were like twins after five decades, so he became mean too: Mean to each other, but looking for mutual scapegoats—the climax of their revilement of the international communists and the local (Oakland, San Francisco) dynasty of Milk. Imagine that. I became known to the family as, “Bi-polar.” Never even a false positive on it: No, I was diagnosed as “depressive,” and was told flatly by the psychiatrist that I was not manic, no “Bi-polar.” Another said the same thing years later. The turning though? It had not been conceivable to me. I could not have foreseen it when I was a boy, I still don’t know where it came from even if I recognize it as the factor of alcoholic drudgery, which is equal to a series of sickening denouements which is only concluded by death.

I crashed my car twenty-five years later in a foreign country. I had been staying in a large loft in a hotel in the woods of Eastern Europe. When the snow came down, I was high—I had arranged it with the owner. To be high. And the rate. I had been back—repatriated in absolute terms—from two Persian Gulf countries for just over a year by that time. My corporate tour as a freelance programmer had been eleven months in those badlands of the earth. The mimicry of the lock-downs in those countries was my near-doom upon return from them to a “normal” Europe. I had forgotten how to recognize animated reality: Greenery, earth-colored life, the facial expressions of my child and my wife. I was deracinated because I felt deracinated—torn up inside, I am not quite able to describe it without going into severe mental pain and fatigue. But when I was there, I may have been too shy for Arabia as a natal matter, but I was

a tough bull there and no one could hold me back from making my money and tearing up the town quietly and covertly if it was required to get it. The Indian boy-slaves there were not tough. I don't think they knew the word or had the cultural concept: They aren't cowboys, not that you have to be. They labored and they did bend over for their host-country bosses. Sunil was a sad Christian one—a Cross around his neck on one of the more religiously permissive Island states—who virtually begged (you could say, in his way) to have me send him job opportunities to him once I was back in Europe. Said he'd do any kind of work. Naturally. It would be nice and very literary to act surprised, but no, not me, not now. It was his situation and I did not pity him. He was not my responsibility. He had his living, I had mine. Politeness and mutual respect for one another was all that should have ever been expected. That's life. Unfortunately, so was the car accident in Eastern Europe. I had been whoring that night. I was alone, I was unhappy, and I was desperate for sex. And I was drunk, and then I was fleeced. Returning to get back my stolen possessions, I hit black ice in a very black night on a very blacked-out country road: I never even got a skid at 60 miles an hour on the ice, the car just turned in circles and whacked into the side of the earth. It was like a body-blow with a natural logarithm which God had apparently approved of. There was a series of compression waves that threw my comprehension of the world into the river of Styx. I felt like my mind was being unhinged and my eyeballs dumped into the centrifugal swirl as the metal of the car was rammed and finally defeated (the scratching noise was a very tender horror): The magic interval of delay between onset and onslaught and rest, which is embedded in flashback-replay but otherwise will never have a chance with the ethical face of memory, which is simply normal recall. And yet no one died. Certainly not precious Lex the Unhurtale. Lex just had a brain-shake so he had to keep his head forked in a stupid contraption, which he violently discarded as he told the male nurse to back-off in a language that was not English and not wholly Judo. Lex was released without discharge. They were happy to get him out and they did back off. In all fairness, they were not nice people to begin with. Just scrubs of the earth which I was bound to encounter when ramming into it the way I did and needing to get sucked-off and fleeced by the prostitute and her cohorts the way I did. And the drinking the way I did. And the immorality of my life, and the desperation of its causes, and the gout of its reasons. Portentous characters, all of those. Closed-down now, though. There is a need in one's life—at some point—to close off what I call "the bron-witted season of hate." I did. Another four years, the length of time it takes to get a degree in English, and I closed it off. Hitting the four-o helped that, it snowed on that day. Doesn't it always snow when a man, or a woman, for a woman is a man, she has this advantage, she's husky, and fluid, so when either she or he turns four-o it snows. It doesn't waver. If they are able to make love that day, so much the better: For her, for him, and yes, for world peace. Regardless of whether they're of separate races. One shouldn't have race on the mind—especially a man should not—when honoring a woman's alloy. She's too good for it. Man will never find a gender that will satisfy him more. It's not gonna happen Joe-Joe. It's either a lover-boy or a lover-girl. And if you have any arguments, even transgender is not symmetrical, although it does take care of the particular requirement.

II

When I was a shy child of thirteen I was happy. That is how simple life was. There were people, trees, food, and happiness. I had my own set of cartoon characters (my own comic strip). I was in charge of the dialogue and the still animation. My favorite one was the Misfits: About a bunch of funny cats with mustaches who all thought that they were very cool. There was the boss, there was the dunce, there were the yes-cats, but they were all friends somehow and got a good laugh out of each other: So they let me be one of them, they let me in. I didn't have a character for myself called Lex or anything, but I was right in there with them. All that's required for a universe; it was enough for mine anyway.

Let me get back to Milk. Feinstein said the following in an interview in 2003 on the 25th anniversary of the Moscone-Milk slayings: "I put my finger to see if there was any pulse, and it went in a bullet hole in his chest. I think of it as if it were yesterday. I remember Harvey's body, his blood on me. I see it all." I wonder if she does. I wonder about the doors she actually did walk in to; on more than one level. I am suspicious. I have it as a legacy from the parishioners who looked after me when David Brinkley quietly, winning-out against the blur of the colors on the blipping television—as a gentlemen devoid of grief and shock but not devoid of the recognition for its necessity, told the news of the slayings. I am in possession of an undowried gut: Something was awry. For me it is now like the fifth lake in the city of Copenhagen, I cannot make another correspondence of the whole matter to my adult life: It was the feeling that I got in winter nights on that lake which was the exact same feeling I had when I watched David Brinkley announce the news of the double-slayings of Moscone and Milk. In that posh district of Copenhagen you look out on the fifth and final lake of the series of them and you could see the squawking geese corralled and circled-in by the ice-plates on the lake and rammed up in a cul-de-sac of still-fluid water against the ramparts of the old bridge, when you see it, really, the raunchy white beasts might as well be dead and bloated bodies comically rendered; and more than that even, you might as well be in Moscow or Gdansk; in Gdansk buying amber jewelry in a jewelry shop off the huge square (that repeats itself block by block, so that the main square is a straight line of reproductions of itself that will wear your legs down should you walk long enough) on a little road near one of the cement-block piers where the sea-water is graced with slicks of oil that refract the whole spectrum of visible light, and the smell of tar rather pities the air because it is better than the smell of smog in other cities. You might as well be in one of these two cities for all of the crazy horror of the world-line: Neither of the cities have honest clerics while Copenhagen is virtually ecumenical. That's a very stubborn difference. De Gaulle would have made the same observation, as would have the parishioners, for their generations formed a unique cross-section in Vietnam and Cambodia, and the dying efforts of the parents of the last colonials. He would have thought: "The subtlety of America. And I had to make a martyr of Bastien-Thiry. The idiot." The parishioners would have named actual people and remained knowingly and disdainfully quiet about the rest of it, as if it were a *fait accompli* and as if they had stopped caring anyway. It is amazing. Christopher Moscone, the slain Moscone's son, said of the city that

killed his father: "I love the city, and I hate the city for that." That's complicated, especially when said twenty-five years after-the-fact. It can't be comfortable. Cities and people and legacies and political dynasties: Hence dogs. So where's the jackal I ask myself thirty years later. And I say it with a hardened face with my molars forced up against each other.

Well. In 1980 I entered one of my custom-made cartoon characters into a contest for publicizing the rebuilding and rehabilitation of the San Francisco cable cars, their grids, their pulleys, their old technologies. The cartoon character was a big bird that stood upright with huge angel-wings spread out, and a wide, maniacally happy smile on his face. He was saying: "I know more. I know all about it." Of course it was not in captions, it was written in his enlightened dare-me-if-you-dare face. This is a fact. That's what I wanted his face to say, that's what would take the prize, I felt it in my little bones, my undowried gut. A cable car was in the background propping him up and I had drawn a curved street-banner at the top reading "San Francisco Cable Car" spanning the width of the picture. I won the contest. The parishioners were proud, especially the male one who took me fly-fishing and to Halfmoon bay, who as an engineer admired Lex's artistic talent, was proud of it and boasted about it to his friends; a man who was not in the habit of boasting about his own children. "Damn, Bill," he'd say to Bill Eddie, his friend since childhood: "Look at what Lex did. It's good, Bill." Bill would nod and say, "Sure, Pete." Bill would look over at me and say: "Hey, Lex, that's real good." Then he'd go back to fixing the plumbing underneath the kitchen sink, where the two of them would argue about which tools and parts to use for another hour. "Damn you're stubborn, Bill." "Pete! Leave me alone! I'm turning the screw!" Peg, the female parishioner, my grandmother, would say: "Don't be an ass, Pete." She was heard but would be dutifully ignored by my grandfather.

Life can appear threadbare when it is not. The appearance of an exception is when life can be most interesting and challenging, and survival can seem most elusive and the future is inconceivable. There is "the interesting" at the very time of the challenge as it is experienced and will never be experienced again, and there is the other one: The one that comes after you've survived and a future has finally been conceived. It takes years, many years: The furrows in the balmy skein of your forehead and the lines in your face deepen and are made visible as they never had been, the creases in your hands take on the appearance of crevices. You change. I remember the walks on the roads at night: An old satchel that had belonged to the male parishioner; new leather shoes, a long jacket that had belonged to the male parishioner, some ID, some small cash; young walks in a foreign country in the night, post-communist and rising. The walks got shorter but came-in at further distances as the navigation of the globe became necessary in the search for cash; large wads of it that you could stash with the help of quiet principals and accountants; and the first languages got better, and the next languages got harder to pick up. As it was with the languages, it was with the peoples. It was quite the opposite with material consumption though: Those choices became greater. House, cars, the ability to clothe and feed your still-young family, which came as an early installation. Your age and your cash meant becoming part of the world-tree.

I have never been sure about pity for the damned, but then Robert Lowell had similar concerns: "Pity the Monsters!" The personal politics of age and survival-travel is difficult. I've observed and blindly witnessed—with a shyness of stupefaction throughout—several ethnicities and social varieties of downtrodden peoples; I noticed, in one way or another, and always with my brow furrowed and my eyes squinted and my mind too heavy with it all, that they had in common more than one thing: They were all very inventive; most of them had families; and they all defied scarcity. It is an amazing thing. But the proposition itself is not difficult: They have methods. They have a habit of putting to rest all of the truly damning sureties of the politicians and financiers, of the corporate grubbers and the principals and agents of evasive third party agreements; none of those personas have methods; they have armies of stamina, and everything that comes with it, but they have no method. For me? There was always only the next contract to be agreed on: Cash for product, and its litigate conditions, mere phraseology that was warred over and warred on but never actionable (how can you make contractual conditions actionable in Nigeria with MegaCorp X?). Methods are of such gargantuan importance. It is strange though. The millennium crossed us and I don't believe we were watching. I believe that we got hit.

III

Which needs to take me back to Oakland; and the Hofbrau downtown; and the roast beef and the gravy and the root beer, sitting at the eating-stool, watching people, aware of the cashier, aware of the man slapping the sandwich together, the secular friendliness of it all. And the afternoon sun in Oakland. And the sidewalks in the sun; and the shaded area outside the Hofbrau because the sun slides down to the west not the east, walking down on the West side of the street, the Hofbrau side: One direction, north towards Berkeley, was known and understood, the other, towards the post-industrial badlands between Oakland and Alameda, was not and one never went in that direction. And the dumpsters just around the side of the Hofbrau, in even deeper shade because of the awnings of the 40's industrial brick buildings. And the pleasant walk down the street to the parking, and on the way, to Sears Roebuck and Co.

It was near to there, on the west side of the street and uptown in the business district towards Sears, that the male parishioner and Lex found themselves sitting on a bench at a bus-stop. The parishioner had a piece of political literature open; he was in the habit of carrying his favorite, often treasured (for the moment) snippets of reading around with him until he was satisfied with everything about the topic he saw there, whatever that might have meant to him; for he was not readable in those dimmer things of one's private thoughts. He spoke to you truthfully only through indirect expressions of approval or pride or scientific or geographic or political interests, of which he had many of all of those. On that day he showed me the maps in the magazine article that he pulled out of his shirt; he pointed out all of the countries around the world where the Soviets had infiltrated and now carried the dominant sphere of influence. He was trying

to tell me something that he thought was very, even, in his mind, profoundly important: It was an expression of his need to look after himself as a person whom he believed was able to care, even in the desert of his own unhappiness and self-doubt; in the sense actually that he had no one else to love except me and the female parishioner. He didn't do this with anyone else, certainly not with his own children. But he did it with me and the female parishioner all the time. I never fully understood the man, I never will; that saddens me deeply, it is a loss to me, the universe implodes right there for me—it turns the Bible to dust, and I disdain its purport: I am not stupid in these things, and I refuse to be, especially when it concerns either of the parishioners.

Still, as a young boy however, at that time, I just knew that the man's intellect was cosmic but limited by something I could not name then, but knew was present, and that I can name now: A bigotry that he did not understand himself, or it may be that he could not, whether by the necessity and general order of things, or as a condition that may have been ticking away in his innermost persona, below the tickings of grey matter, and not accessible even to one's unique but quite possibly epiphenomenal self; the entity by which one judges oneself and on which one is judged by others. Because in the latter case, no typical target of bigotry would ever have noticed it in my grandfather—and they never did, or if they did they sure did not let on, because everyone got on gaily, as gaily as people can get on; the parishioner was of that element.

In the hours before his father died his father was declared comatose; and it was only a matter of hours since the parishioner had gotten him to the hospital. The old parishioner said that his old man's eye had twitched and blinked open, then-close when the parishioner looked away from the doctor and towards and at his father. He told me that he could never be sure whether it was a muscle-reflex or an intended act in the very sight of his son, and done to and for his son; the old wink, the old nod, as old as cultural man; for me, Rembrandt's image of King Arthur at his round table with his knights, and his sword held up with his whited-out and almost blinded right eye in the severe duration of its closure, defying sordid human nature with that very nature itself—total defiance, incongruous with how men prefer to understand life, for which they have no preference in the first place.

His old man died that night, on Christmas Eve. Every year the old parishioner brooded that night but showed no intent of wishing others to comment, or necessarily of even to notice—I don't think he cared either way; he was quiet at the head of the table in his large and dominant house, always dazed on that night, and looking around the table as if he did not know where he was; while his adult children squawked like dumb geese and passed the sweet potatoes and sipped on white wine.

The old parishioner was not as solemn as death itself, which marks a difference, but he was solemn on things. Geology, geography, paleontology, botany, and African cultures. He could name the American colloquial or the generic Latin of every flower in California, Montana, Nevada, Idaho, and God only knows where else. He was genuinely delighted by the beauty of fauna and flora, he could become enthusiastically verbal and then quietly engaged with the specimen itself in his hands or in the closeness of his sight, and the difference, the change, from the one to the other was not noticeable to people who witnessed him, and

conversed with him, and listened to him: (He was charming, in other words, and it caged many a woman's poor mind; the female parishioner was too cunning to let it shake her, and too intelligent not to acknowledge the bitchery in a manner that anyone could ever declare themselves witnesses to, and that's how she appeared; she was light-years ahead of any of them in generic and specific knowledge, especially the ones with feigned intellects or doctorates or characteristically, both). For me this made him the instinctive conservationist that he truly was, in my mind as only the early members and founders of the Audubon Society were; it's no surprise that that was his favorite membership-society, whom over the decades he consistently sent checks to.

I have his physics notes from his Stanford days; he's got relativity in there, and in the text-book as well as I've verified because I possess it; it was at a time when Einstein was still considered a victor of the power of the human imagination but not more—if there is more than that (and which was used as a pejorative against Einstein in any event, an important event as it turned out to be). The parishioner was solemn. He was not easily understood, not least to himself. He was cosmic, his intellect was universal, but he was in many ways a failure as a human being. Although he did not fail me, and that is a true fact. It is all I care about; let the other dead bury their own dead.

Jesse Patton. Robert Patton, father. Adoption. Courtship.

1875-1899 generation:

(1) LAST COLONIALS

(2) MILLERS

Children of:

Parents of: PARISHIONERS

1900-1914 generation:

(1) FDRCOM

(2) WWIIADVANTWASPS, then KORCOMS, then VNGENPACS;

Children of:

Parents of: KORYWASPS

1915-1929 generation:

(1) FIRST PARISHIONERS

Children of: LAST COLONIALS

(2) SECOND PARISHIONERS

Parents of: BABIES, then VNCOMS

(2)

1930-1944 generation:

1945 generation: babies; children of the parishioners

1960 generation.

1975 generation.

1990 generation.

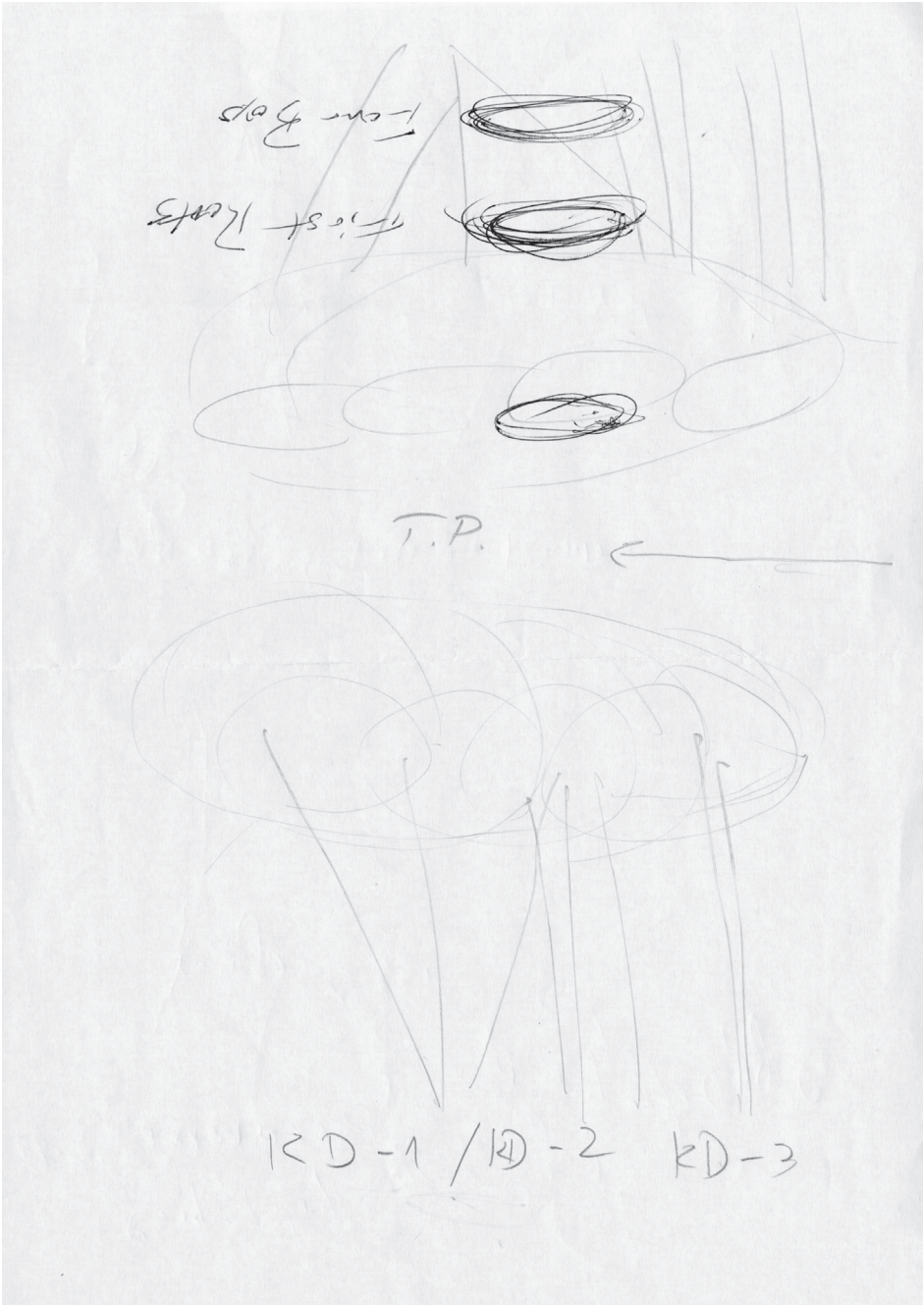
The manner of my grandfather's death.

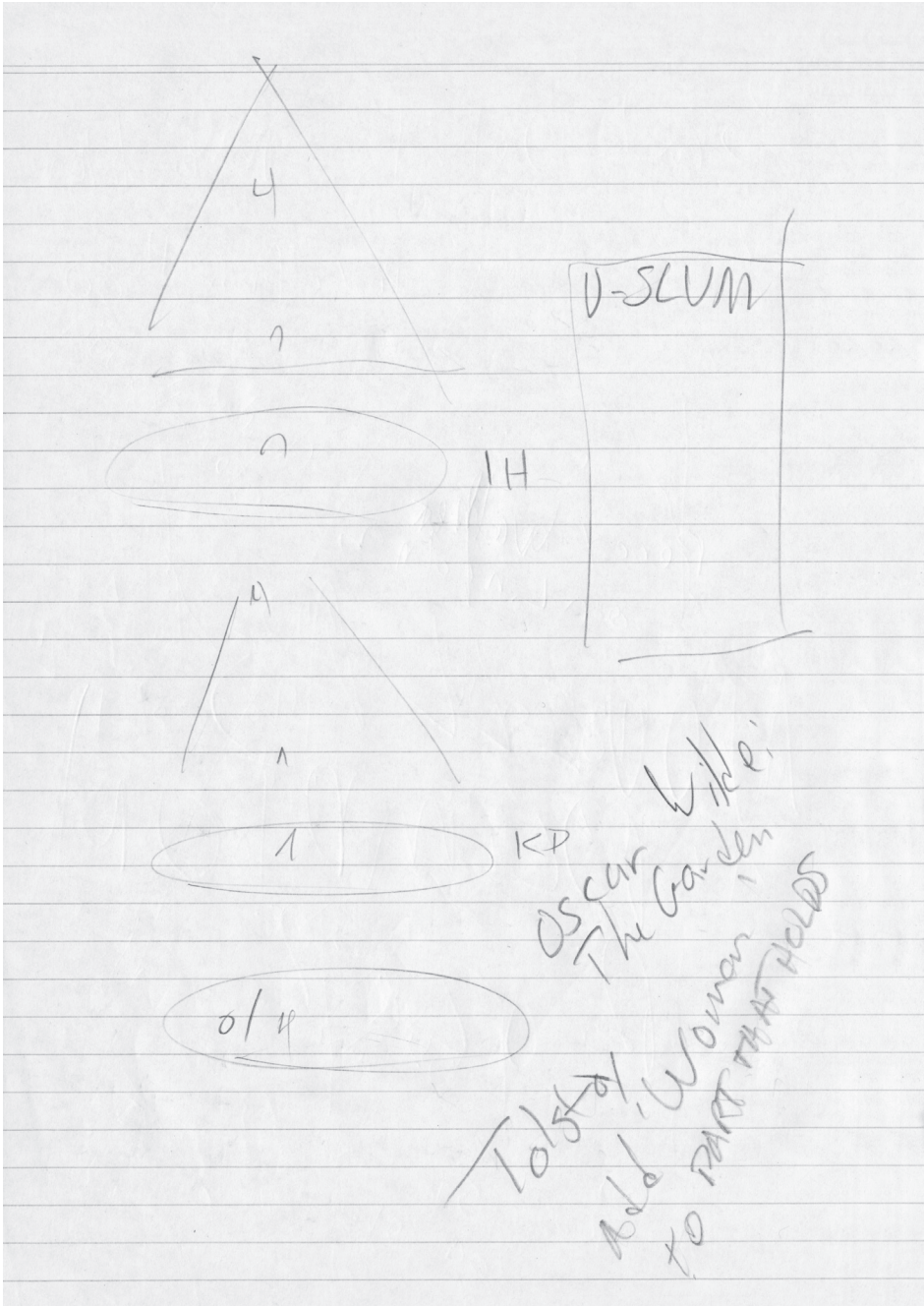
Milk 40 years old. Aged, then going—died 1978, at 48.

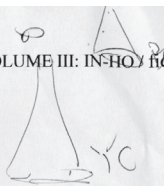
The writer and diarist Andre Gide. Polish laborer story

In an uncanny way Tolstoy adapts his art to meet every exigency of the human
natures he describes

THE
AUTHOR'S DISCLOSURE
OF THE DESIGNING OF
*BETWEEN HEAVEN AND
EARTH*



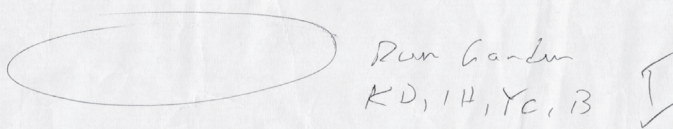
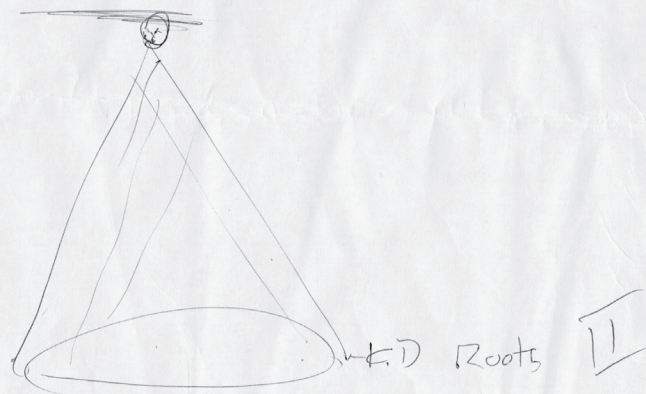
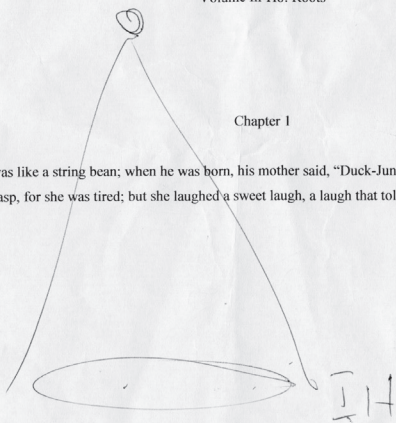


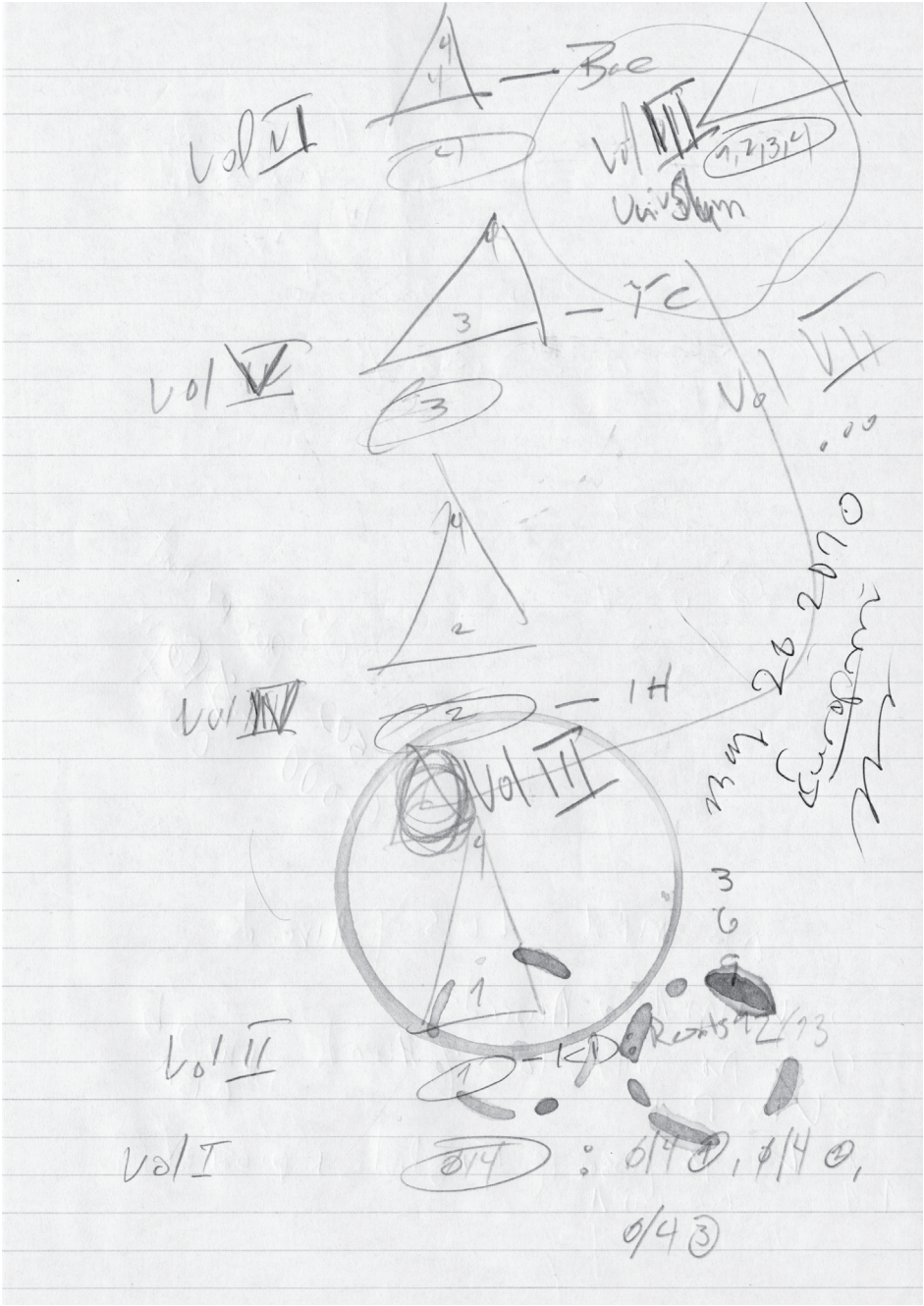


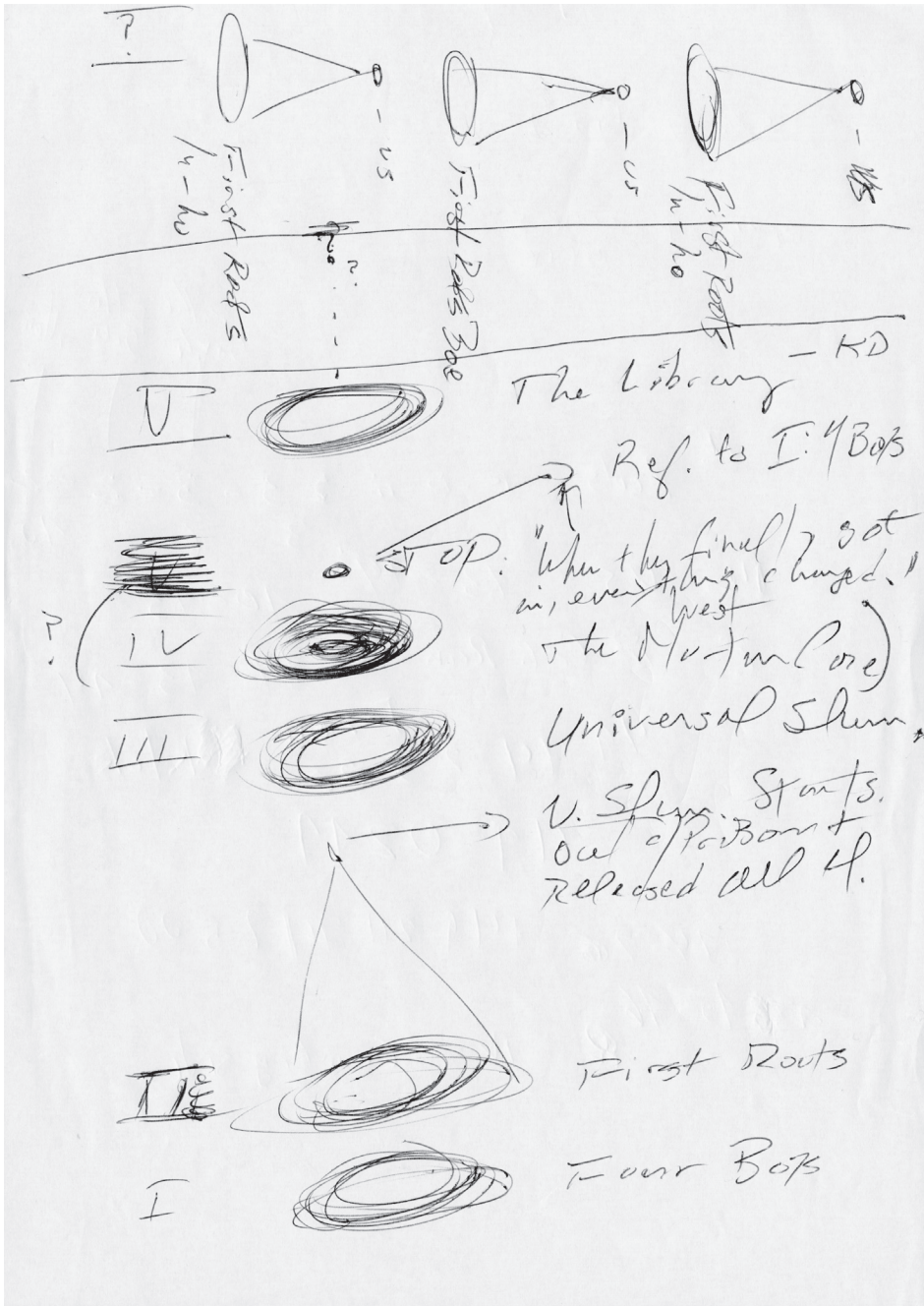
Volume In-Ho: Roots

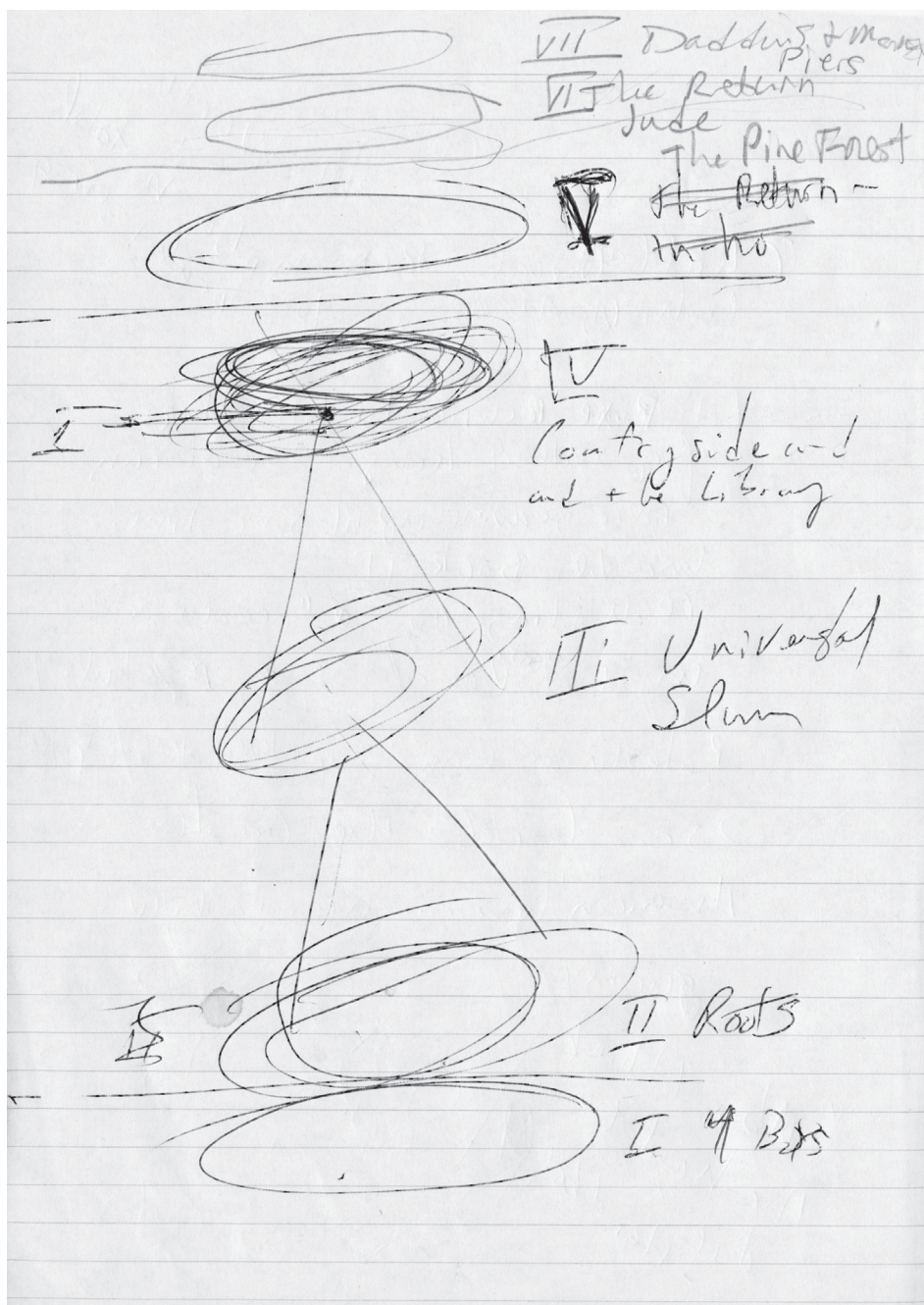
Chapter 1

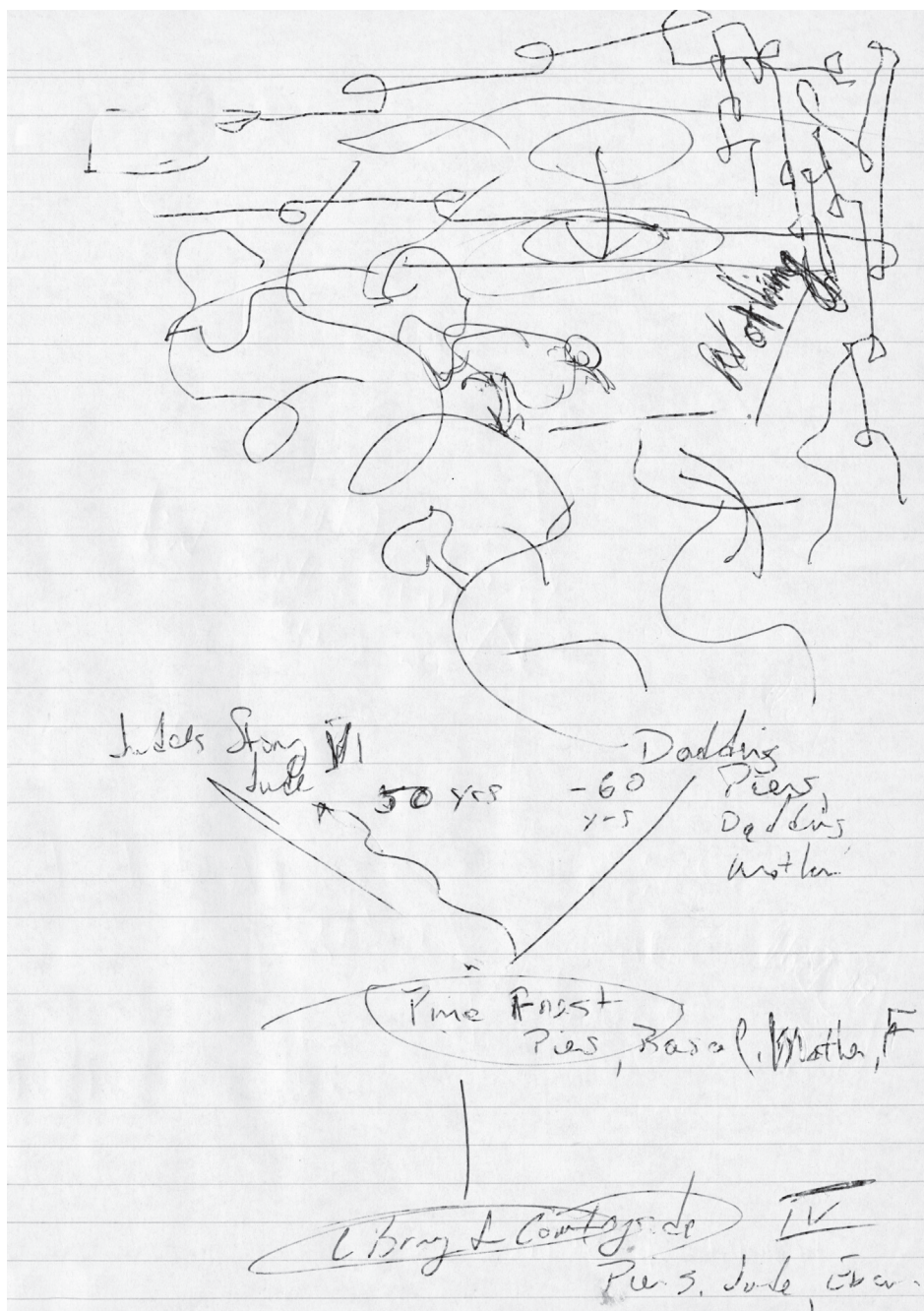
In-ho was like a string bean; when he was born, his mother said, "Duck-Jung, we have a string bean!" She couldn't gasp, for she was tired; but she laughed a sweet laugh, a laugh that told Duck-Jung: "I am happy."











Morpheus's Desert of the Real

Morpheus's Desert of the Real

Every bullet has a billet or more: these are called "kills," "hits," and sundry other in our grandiose Roman jargon re-seeded in Americana. With that in mind, the early nineties were dirty years at Berkeley in every respect. In 1991, Searle had his big Berkeley hills house decked with yellow ribbons: Yes, that's correct, we were in Iraq then too, but that time with Prezedent Unelect # 1 Bulsh-sh-shee-can-I-talk-star-wares-tewww or would that be 2 Imprudent? Poppy, we understand you now. Stop masturbating, fuss-head.

Berkeley's good ol' slum-landlord, no we shan't forget him, shan we? Mr. Searle. The Campus Kissinger, self-announced self-declared philistine. You'd think it was a baptismal fiat for him, but wouldn't you then? War Lord of Grammar? Ain't that news. Julian Boyd, this was a good man though, as best they come; and Searle's philosophical confidante, intellectual editor and sixties French Connection to Chomsky. He said to me with a disquieting (to me) actual disgust, a bitterness and turn in the lips not normally seen in that man: "I want to go and pour blood on those yellow ribbons and down the walls of his house." Searle, the Feyerabend-hating war-collusionist and student radical FBI-informant with a succession of governors in his pocket—his early sympathy with the FSM was an arcane relic unrelated to that other activity. Those nights at his Napa Valley estate were surely shock and awe for those oh so brave chicken hawks. Yes, while Searle's just skewed and horse-blinkered dead-ringer Stormin' Norman Schwarzkopf poured gasoline on 10,000 Iraqis up yonder 'long the Tapline Road, 'k'now that? I didn't either. Not at that time anyway, not in the detail. Well, that road extended from US Marine Corps Camp 13 at the Port of Al Jubail up top the map of Saudi Arabia near the Kuwaiti border, that road it ran up into Southern Iraq and funneled into the Karbala Gap at the marshed inland mud of the Euphrates, one of the world's "choke-points" on an oil tapline, Hell on Earth for those afraid of getting torched to death and then photographed for a hungry Roman public, whose media-whore gave it a new name: The Highway of Death. In 1991, while students swore to Descartes, a very un-Roman personage. We didn't have anything if we didn't have our very erudite perspective, did we?

Chomsky declared his terrorist-sweethearts that year, he must have forgotten his encomiums to the pacifist von Humboldt in his slim hardly-arcane little book Cartesian Linguistics. Far from his anti-Vietnam stand with Robert Lowell and

Norman Mailer when they crossed the Potomac into Virginia (Lowell canonized that river twice, once in words, the other with his wobbling but assertive feet) in the year of my birth twenty-five years earlier in order to levitate the Pentagon. My good Berkeley Biblical scholar swore that Chomsky must not set foot on the Berkeley campus that year or ever. Funny little man, tearing across the campus with twenty books under his arms, a raging little prophet flailing his arms a'right tough out of the Apocrypha the way he was taught it was dun good-like. Tragically, he drops his fucking books in the Quad as Chomsky gets booed by Lakoff and eighty per cent of the Berkeley Linguistics department. (Poor Lakoff, he still held the grudge: that the MIT Linguistics department didn't let him in when he wanted to become a Doctor there, Chomsky naturally complicit in the decision.)

This was the atmosphere at Berkeley in the few years prior to my graduation. Perhaps it was only that way for me. Each to his monad. Each and every student nomad. I do remember an event at People's Park. It was a weekend. I found myself wandering around the city. Walked up Haste from Telegraph and sat on a bench just on the edge of People's Park. There were large bright white windowless busses up top of the park occupying that section of shady Bowditch. It was simple: The FEDs were everywhere, hulking it out in the sunshine in the park and returning high on crack into the busses to hump each other. But really, the old black guy on the bench with me, real long shards of grey in his beard; I says to him, "man, dig, what's going on?" The first erudite thing I ever heard said while I was at Berkeley, as I came to understand over the few years that followed. Why? A boy and his dog and his Daddy shot dead in the hills of Idaho, the Janet-Reno-CS-Gas dead zone in Texas. Then, oh then: terror and atrocity and flanked racism in Oklahoma City, the Murrah Building implodes and everyone dies. With Gore Vidal to craft all commentary as post-hoc delirium. So. The good old man answers my question, he says to me: "They're comin' down again." Simple. Clean. Platonic. Erudite. Didn't dip his head back down though. Just looked straight into the distance available to him. He must have been measuring.

I walked down to Telegraph, feeling a little enlightened but then also very alone in the universe, leaving the old man to his devices. (He was in need of none, the FEDs were farting each time they came out of a bus: God and the old man like a couple of Brothers in fact had those flagellants busted that day, and good for them, plaudits and praise galore to them.) I looked at my favorite posters canvassed on the walls and on the sad sycamore trees: They were my salves but also the lonely grists for the mill of my then-Berkeley mind: "Zappa for President." Sure, Zappa'd re-arrange the whole thing, starting, with Zappa-like cunning and clairvoyance (made alloy by his God-given ability for mischief), at the place where it all begins in America: The Treasury. And Jello Biafra, Zappa'd make him his Treasury Secretary, brought on solely to close down its last account, and they'd perform Biafra's "Die for Oil without the Net Sucker." Only they'd be singing the dirge of a whole different class this time, graduating a wholly different Class of '93 into permanent retirement instead of into the teeming life of our colorful world: Bechtel, Halliburton, the Carlyle Group; Schulz, Baker, Cheney, foreclosing on the all-too-likely prophetic return of Scooter Libby and Richard Perle from back out of their Darknesses; and the cross-dressing Dogs

Ash-baby and Rummy-boo taken to Ezra's Pound and given a pair of good owners and a large purple room with gym benches, leathers, and J. Edgar's well-guarded closet of relics ... The Holy Grail. And all the other clownish ghouls. Zapp(a)-ed with music and oracular poetry. But only in Berkeley, folks, only in the mind of a Berkeley graduate. Sad. What a gallivant for the dead and their years. (Not. ... Ha@! That's for you, Cal Slackers; and 4 U 2.)

*STONE COLD, HERR
OBERGRUPPENFÜHRER*

To Sylvia Plath

STONE COLD, HERR OBERGRUPPENFÜHRER

What the truce is all about? or about! I can't tell exactly. But here's what's going on. I'm publishing a book. So I have enough things to worry about whichever direction I go. I have a family to support and a child to raise. Who's to say I'm not fighting in Afghanistan? Bombs dropping everywhere: the economic crisis, the shutting out of controversial writing and the irony of our pathetic love affair with 'contrarians' on the lecture circuits, the cognoscenti's prize-winning committees, the hacks' newspaper slots and the Magi's lit and political journals and whore-streaked columns: yes, they ride the publishing world with the highest of professionalism, but they're just so many bombs falling on me. What exactly is the difference in the end-effect as a human being – to me I mean, or the hypothetical other who walks in my likeness?

I've wished for many years to set things straight, in one way or the other. It's happened in my joy-milks: my times of gladness, of inspired heat in my heart and freeness in my mind, like I could walk without tiring until time came to an end. There comes a then, of course, as there always does – when time does stop but I find myself tired because it is not the end of time. Meaning therefore: Tired of my money-getting method, my trade name as a computer programmer, tired of everything except my little family, and our Little Big Dreams. I'm no hero. I didn't even have the opportunity to stand against Ribbentrop and Heydrich (dead martyr) at the Ss. Cyril and Methodius Cathedral in Prague.

I was born in America in the late sixties of the same 20th Century. Only months made the difference for the murders of King and Bobby Kennedy, I was hatching at the time... but I came out months after; a few, not many. With JFK, it was different. I came in on the same day he went out. It was just that it was years this time not months. Isn't that a joke? Just years.

Why am I organizing all of this crap? Amusement. Boredom. Tired of getting tired. In an attempt to wratch up some points. Animate that ghost-white on the screen. (O Lily that I could.) Anything. Anything I suppose. Just as long as it matters. Obergruppenführer Heydrich. Signature. Ss. Cyril and Methodius Cathedral. Desecrated.

Would it be a conceit to say that this is like programming? I have no idea. It seems that the Bible has been right though about things. Families are going against families. Fathers against sons, even more than sons against fathers, which is a prodigal element anyway. Do I have to clarify – and then mention – such things? I don't know. I have no idea. I don't know what the rules are. I don't think anyone does. I am sorry, but I am not: I am certain the poets have no clue. That doesn't even pose a question for me though, it doesn't beg. I'll not be slovenly at least here. I've got my title: Stone Cold. Stone. Cold. And very affectionate. I mean, me. I. Am very affectionate. Obergruppenführer. State. Your. Case. We are. No better. Than you. So. State. Your. Case. Don't be. Stone. Cold. We are here. To listen. We have. Always been. Don't. Despair. Obergruppenführer. You were just a simple man. You didn't mean it. So listen closely. To what I say. To what I say. And you'll see the remains of the Day. We'll revive it together. It's that simple. For a simple man. For You and I. Simple men. Shall we douse the mushroom cloud together? We shall, I agree. I agree. It's so easy. For a simple man. Like you. Like me. Like US. And of-A: A Nazi and a closet fag congressman: You never knew we could be so close, did you? Did you, Obergruppenführer? But we did. While Tolstoy decried the anti-Semitic pogroms, we listened to Theodore Herzl on Mozambique and North Africa. We gave the Jews a homeland. Now we can do what we want. With the impunity that you coveted. Just decades. Not even a century. It's slaughter now. Slaughter for riches and Lebensraum. Just like you wanted it. Just how you were preparing yourself to receive it. We all falter now, Obergruppenführer. It's your era now, we the living are the anachronisms, we just carry on your work. We're part of a machine. We've learned. We become accustomed. It's nothing to us. Your world which we built means nothing to us. We are just good builders, we are excellent history-slaves. We have no pride, we have only fear and loathing and boredom and building. You, Herr Obergruppenführer, you had passion. We murder in your name and it bores us. We even built a machine that changes your name at the right intervals so that we can build and kill in peace. That seems to be the only thing we like: the intervals. Dull passions, sleep, dull passions, sleep – in that ordering. It's regimental, I agree, but it doesn't seem so to us. Or if it does, which is more likely when our spleen is up (daemoniac America) or when our moods are down (our national pride rallied to a collective slough of despond: our murdered royalty, whether on the street or in a hotel kitchen, America never calluses the wounds, she's raw and romantic and dead by nostalgia), then it is spiritual: tea-bag poultice applied to our Oedipus-eyes (O E! O Oedipus! our sisters of mercy, the mole-bearing mourners who suck our eyes: where are they! where are they O E!) Obergruppenführer. Oedipus Rex. Defconfense: Antigone, she cried over. Storeyed-roots. She cried over. Storied roots. The Third Reich was a breeding ground for archeological nutcases. Mythically, they'd bleed the Storeyed-roots. Obergruppenführer. We carried on well. A little to the left, then a little bit to your Right. We're right behind you. O Sadness, O Woman with the long hair, cry for us. Mourn us. Mourn what we are. Antigone. Mourn your brothers.



Alex Patterson was born and raised in Oakland, California. He studied English at the University of California. He has traveled widely, having lived and worked in fifteen different countries across three continents. He lives in Europe. He did his thesis in a graduate course on James Joyce's *Ulysses*, partly under the conduction and aegis of Professor Emeritus Julian Boyd. He concentrated on Joyce's use of modality in *Ulysses*.

UC Berkley English professor Robert Hass – winner the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Awards – has written of Alex: "Alex Patterson is a very gifted young writer."